the weekly
Standard

THE PLAMEGATE HALL OF SHAME
FRED BARNES

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HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH VS. HUMAN RIGHTS

BY Joshua Muravchik

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CORT FOR PRESIDENT 2008

Dr. Hugh Cort kicked off his campaign for the 2008 Republican Presidential nomination with a speech at the National Press Club in Washington D.C. on January 21, 2005, followed by questions from the press. Dr. Cort also autographed copies of his book, **Saddam's Attacks on America: 1993; September 11, 2001; and the Anthrax Attacks**, that shows that Saddam funded and assisted Osama bin Laden in attacking America. Dr. Cort will be on the Republican primary ballot in New Hampshire in 2008. Dr. Cort is working hard to stop Osama bin Laden's new coming attacks on America, his "American Hiroshima" project, where Osama plans to blow up 10 American cities with suitcase nukes. For more information please visit **www.stopdoomsday.com**.

Dr. Cort believes that there are vital things America must do to win the War Against Terror, and stop Osama bin Laden's new coming attacks on America, and also prevent Iran from getting nukes to give to terrorists:

1. We must catch Adnan Shukrijumah, who the FBI calls the next Mohammed Atta, before he carries out Osama's "American Hiroshima" plan to destroy ten American cities with suitcase nukes. Osama has already smuggled 20 suitcase nukes into the U.S. through the porous Mexican border, says Hamid Mir, the Fox News Middle East expert, who has interviewed Osama five times. Hamid Mir believes Osama will pull the trigger if we attack Iran's nuclear facilities, or sooner.
2. The FBI must search inside the mosques in America's major cities and see if any weapons or suitcase nukes are hidden there.
3. After we catch Shukrijumah and disarm any dirty bombs or suitcase nukes in mosques, we can then safely take out Iran's nuclear sites and the mullahs' headquarters with bombing runs. When we take out the mullahs, this will allow the good people in Iran, the moderates, to finally take over.
4. We have never had adequate troop strength in Iraq to truly stabilize Iraq and finally win the war. We won the Gulf War by using the Powell Doctrine of overwhelming force, with 650,000 coalition troops. In Iraq we have less than a fourth of that number of soldiers, only 140,000, and we wonder why things aren't going well in Iraq. If we get 100,000-200,000 more boots on the ground, like the wise General Shinseki wanted, we can finally secure Iraq and win the war. If we pull out of Iraq, like the cowardly Democrats propose, it will be a disaster in the War Against Terror. If we didn't like Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda training terrorists in Afghanistan, just think what it would be like if they took over Iraq and had 10 billion dollars of Iraqi oil money every year to fund their worldwide war of terror.
5. We must bomb the headquarters of the ruling Baathist Party in Damascus if they continue to harbor terrorists (40 terrorist organizations have their world headquarters in Damascus).
6. If we get tough and take out Iran's nuclear sites, North Korea may voluntarily give up their nukes. If they don't, we need to bomb their nuclear sites, because they will sell nukes to terrorists.

Credentials: Dr. Hugh Cort III is a psychiatrist who's spent years researching terrorism sources. He belongs to the Republican National Committee's President's Club, and the Republican Presidential Task Force. Veteran's Vision Magazine invited him to speak at its monthly meeting in Washington D.C., where he shared the podium with the Pentagon's 3rd in command. Dr. Cort plans to run for President in the 2008 Republican primary to help spread his critical message. He wrote *Saddam's Attacks on America: 1993; September 11, 2001; and the Anthrax Attacks.*

See: www.stopdoomsday.com, www.cortforpresident.com

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Breaking the Oil Habit

Setting a direction for energy independence

Calling for a "Manhattan Project" to wean the country from oil won't work; the original Manhattan Project occurred during a life-and-death struggle, and the singular objective was clear from the outset. A return to energy abundance needs no such crash program, nor — given the enormous range of policy choices and technical alternatives — could one be devised. A dramatic government policy is much less important than a clear and consistent one. To give market forces a chance to redirect the energy industry, entrepreneurs need some assurance that risks won't be enhanced by a government that cannot set or maintain priorities. What should take oil's place? On that subject, today's markets are utterly confused.

—Steve Stein

Sustaining Our Resolve

Eyes on the arrows as well as the olive branch

During the first phase of this war on terror, going back certainly to the 1970s, we were essentially passive. We were hit by increasing numbers of terrorist acts, but, though there was a gradual buildup of concern, we did nothing significant in response to these attacks. Then September 11 woke America up. We reacted powerfully, putting in place a different philosophy and taking a great variety of actions to implement that philosophy. We are now nearly five years away from that calamitous event. The war continues, but the juices of reaction to 9/11 have subsided. We must now realize that the job in a third phase of the war — necessary if we are to be successful — is to put our efforts on a sustainable basis, gaining broad support at home and abroad. As in the cold war, public understanding and support will be as crucial as persistent pressure and the will to win.

—George P. Shultz

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Naguib Mahfouz, 1911-2006

With the death of Naguib Mahfouz last Wednesday, the Middle East lost a cultural icon, and the world lost a prolific storyteller. In 1988, Mahfouz became the only writer to be awarded the Nobel prize for works in Arabic, cementing his reputation as the Arab world's preeminent novelist. In his native Egypt, people of all ages speak of Mahfouz with such affection one might think he was everyone's grandfather. And, in a sense, he was.

Mahfouz's writings are to Cairo what Woody Allen's movies are to New York: love letters to their author's hometown. Mahfouz chronicled the large-scale events of 20th-century Egypt—independence from the British, the rise of pan-Arab nationalism and Nasserist socialism, conflict and peace with Israel—through the eyes of the common man. His characters were members of the hustling and bustling Cairene middle class. Most notable among his 30-some novels are *Midaq Alley* and the *Cairo Trilogy*, which presented readers around the world with gripping vignettes of everyday life.

He was a devout Muslim, but first a patriot who saw Egypt not only as an Islamic civilization, but also as a product of its rich Pharaonic past. Though he shied away from politics, his outspokenness made him an unwitting political figure. His books were banned in many Arab countries in response to his vocal support for the Camp David Accords. And the controversy over his 1959 "heretical" novel, *The Children of Gebelawi*, prefigured Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa against Salman Rushdie 30 years later.

Mahfouz's defense of Rushdie led an Islamic extremist to make an assassination attempt on the writer in 1994. During one of his weekly writer's salons at a local coffeehouse, a member of al-Jihad rushed in and stabbed the author in the neck. Though the attack left him with limited physical mobility, by all accounts his spry wit remained intact through his final days.

Preternaturally humble, Mahfouz believed that his abilities as a writer needed constant improvement. He once famously said that, "A writer must sit down to write every day, pick up his pen and write something, anything, on a piece of paper." We are fortunate that he took his own advice, leaving behind an ample collection of novels, short stories, and plays. ♦

The Forces of Reaction

Yes, it's nearly summer's end, the leaves are beginning to turn, and even the Katrina retrospectives are less frequent these days. But surely readers will join The Scrapbook in registering horror at Linda Greenhouse's latest front-page revelation in the *New York Times*.

Did you know that, in the Year Anno Domini 2006, there are only seven female clerks (out of 37) for the coming Supreme Court term? To be sure, as Greenhouse notes, the retirement of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor reduced, by 50 percent, the quota—oops, the number—of women on the court, leaving poor Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg "all alone in my corner on the bench."

But last year at this time there were twice as many female clerks, which is bad enough since just under 50 percent of law school graduates are women. Coincidence? We think not. Even Justice David Souter, who believes "a mix is a wonderful thing," had to admit to the *Times* that he, too, has no incoming gals in his chambers, lamely explaining that he had "hired the top four applicants, who turned out to be men."

Any silver lining to this cloud? Only this: Once the court's consciousness is raised on the issue, thanks to Greenhouse and the *Times*, the nation's left-handed, redheaded, Seventh-Day Adventist, and gay law graduates will feel emboldened to stake their statistical claim for clerkships that (in Greenhouse's memorable words) pay "a modest $63,335 for [one] year of service." ♦

Comes a Time

The Associated Press moved a big scoop on its wires August 31. Under the headline, "Pentagon Moves Toward Monitoring Media," reporter Matthew Perrone revealed: "The U.S. command in Baghdad is seeking bidders for a two-year, $20 million public relations contract that calls for monitoring the tone of Iraq news stories filed by U.S. and foreign media."

For a war in which many of the most important battles are fought on the airwaves and in English and Arabic-language media, such a plan might make sense. But the AP smelled something nefarious. "The program comes during what has appeared to be a White House effort, before the fifth anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, to take the offensive against critics at a time of doubt about the future of Iraq."

Well, okay. The program also "comes during" the first week of the NFL season, National Waffle Week, Pleasure-Your-Mate Month, International Enthusiasm Week, and Bald is Beautiful Days. And can it really be the case that this project is related to the fifth anniversary of 9/11? It's hard to see how. If proposals for the contract are due September 6, that leaves the White House with five days to sort and review the proposals; select and inform the winners; receive the translations and media analysis of coverage from the contractor; and use this new information in speeches, press releases, and maybe even TV and radio ads.

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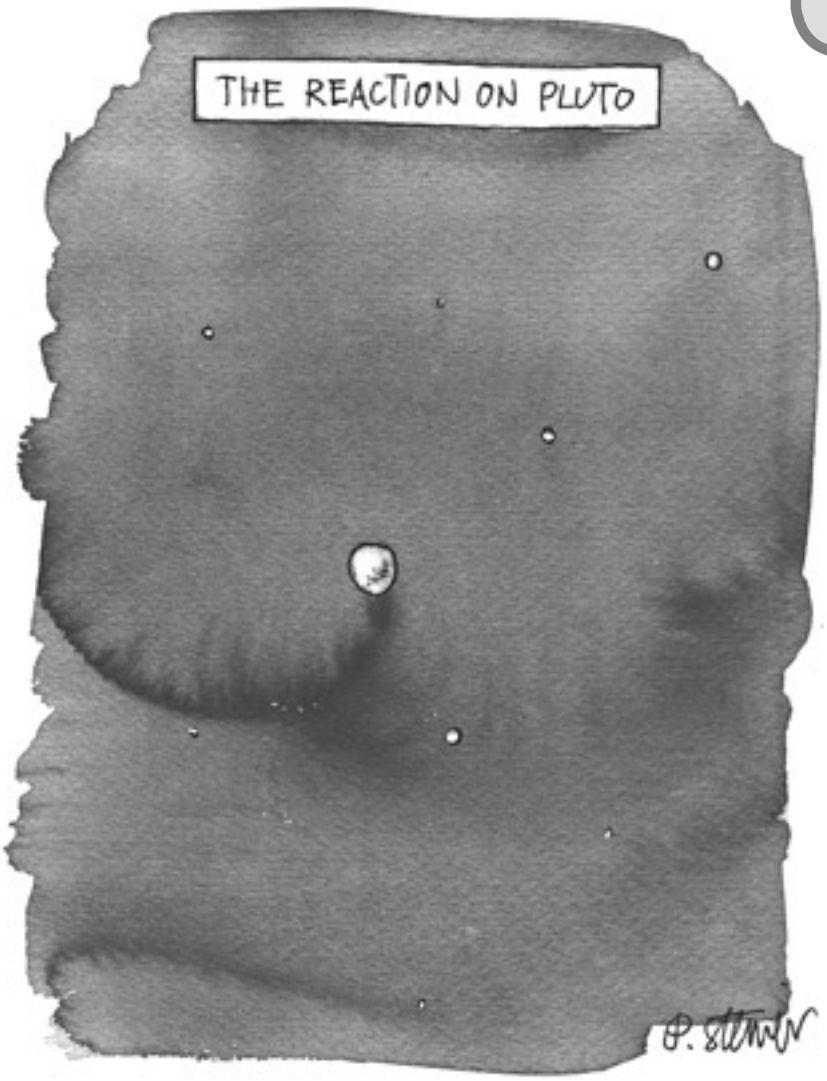

We think this is a story that "comes during" what has appeared to be a slow week for news. ♦

Isn't It Rich?

Many commentators look foolish now that the State Department's Richard Armitage has been revealed as the source who told columnist Robert Novak that Bush critic Joe Wilson's wife worked at the CIA. But the *New York Times*'s drama critic turned drama queen Frank Rich deserves special mention. On December 4, 2005, Rich authored a hysterical column about Bob Woodward, the *Washington Post* editor who had received a "leak" similar to the one Armitage slipped to Robert Novak. What did Woodward do to earn Rich's scorn? He downplayed the seriousness of the CIA/Plame leak scandal, noting that the facts of the case would render all of the media attention "laughable."

Rich wasn't buying. He mocked Woodward as a Bush toady: "The West Wing was merely gossiping idly about the guy, Mr. Woodward now says, in perhaps an unconscious echo of the Karl Rove defense strategy."

It turns out, of course, that Woodward was right. In fact, Woodward a year ago sounds a lot like Melanie Sloan today. Sloan is the lead attorney for the Wilsons in their civil suit against Dick Cheney, Scooter Libby, Karl Rove, and other unnamed Bush officials. *National Review*'s Byron York asked her whether the Wilsons would include Armitage in their lawsuit now that he has been revealed as Novak's original source. No, said Sloan; "Armitage was just basically gossiping with Novak."

Rich, by the way, has a book coming out Sept. 19, subtly titled: *The Greatest Story Ever Sold: The Decline of Truth from 9/11 to Katrina*. According to a *Booklist* account of the polemic, "Rich maintains that Bush himself was behind the leak." Can't wait for the book tour. ♦

Intelligence Limits

The *New York Times* reassured us a few days ago that "the consensus of the intelligence agencies is that Iran is still years away from building a nuclear weapon." That sent us back to our clip file. From the *Washington Post*, Aug. 11, 1991: "International inspectors . . . unearthed one of the most important—and disturbing—finds of the post-Cold War era: a huge assembly line for the covert manufacture of equipment to make an Iraqi nuclear bomb. The location of the sophisticated, secret factory for manufacturing hundreds of uranium gas centrifuges was unknown to any foreign intelligence agency despite intense scrutiny and untouched by five weeks of severe aerial bombardment during the Gulf War that supposedly eviscerated the Iraqi nuclear project. As such, it is a monument to the world's ignorance about what a determined bomb-builder such as Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein can do."

Of course, as Newt Gingrich recently pointed out, Iran has more than one way to advance its nuclear ambitions: "When the intelligence community says Iran is 5 to 10 years away from a nuclear weapon, I ask: 'If North Korea were to ship them a nuke tomorrow, how close would they be then?'" ♦

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Casual

Door to Door

Around the first of September I tend to have memories of my days selling books door to door during my college summers. I worked in what was called the Bible division, because the lead book was a family Bible. I didn't sell many, since most everyone living in my territories already seemed to have a family Bible. But we had other books to sell—a medical encyclopedia and storybooks for children, among them. And our company, Southwestern, in Nashville, was keen to try out new books. It still is, from what I can tell.

I think the reason I recall those days at this time of year is that during the first week of September we delivered books ordered during the previous three months. So by September we knew how well we'd done, and also that our 13-hour workdays would end soon and we'd be back in class, with some free time at last. Compared with the bookfield, as we called it, college was easy.

I first heard about the book business when I was a high school junior, in Dallas. I met some college guys from Southern Methodist University who netted far more selling books than I made mowing grass. It was intriguing to me, the idea of going off to some other state and seeing what you could do on your own. I wanted to be a bookman.

My parents relented as I finished high school. I memorized the various sales talks and caught a ride to Nashville, where I spent a week in "sales school." It was held at Peabody College, right next to Vanderbilt, which I'd never seen before but where I was to matriculate that fall. The reading list included such classics as Frank Bettger's *How I Raised Myself from Failure to Success in Selling*. Of course, no one wanted to start out a failure.

Our sales crew was sent to central Georgia. My roommate and I rented a place in Perry. I didn't have a car but rode a bike or hitched rides. In August I paid $300 for a brown 1961 Plymouth Belvedere with a broken radio and a rusting trunk.

It was my deliverymobile.

Parts of that summer seem to me now like something out of a Flannery O'Connor story. Once, after I'd hitched a ride near Montezuma, the driver turned off the main road and declared, as he gulped from his quart bottle of beer, "I'm going to take you where you need to be taken, boy!" Fortunately, I'm still here.

I did okay that summer, and sold a second summer, and then a third, and a fourth, and more. The bookfield was good to me, paying for college and beyond. I even bought a new car after my third summer to replace that old Belvedere. I saw much of the South and the Midwest and learned many valuable lessons, among them how to keep records and to read city and county maps.

Yet another lesson concerned the law of averages. If you knocked on enough doors (40 to 50 daily) and made enough demos to actual people (20 to 25), you'd have buyers. Sometimes the law of averages got out of whack. My first week I recorded a 0 day—meaning nobody bought. But there was also a Saturday my last summer when the first 12 houses bought. The thirteenth said no. I thanked the nonbuyer for her time and mentioned that it was against the law of averages for so many people to have consecutively bought. She changed her mind and wrote a check.

My wife and daughter long ago tired of my book-selling recollections. But recently, during a business lunch in a fancy Washington restaurant, the Southwestern Company was mentioned, and I was asked which years I'd sold books. The question came, I soon learned, from another Southwestern alum. I realized I had permission, so to speak, to recall those days. And so I did. The sophisticated lawyer who'd scheduled the lunch listened intently, before marveling that there was a lot more going on out in the country than he and his fellow New Yorkers ever imagined when they were growing up.

Southwestern still has students going door to door—some 3,000 this past summer, according to *USA Today*. As far as I know, none has ever knocked on our door, though one easily could have. I know that because a few years ago I saw a Southwestern book—a one-volume encyclopedia—in our friend Dana's house, four doors away. I knew Dana couldn't have been an easy sell, and she confirmed that she hadn't invited the bookwoman inside. Dana had bought from her right there on the front steps!

Somehow, skilled though she was, the bookwoman missed our house. I wonder how long it would have taken me to buy.

Terry Eastland

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Religious Disputation

I disagree with some of Jay Weiser's claims in "What Luther Wrought" (Aug. 21 / Aug. 28). He writes, "in our era Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI with their absolutist views of papal power are worthy successors to the Counter-Reformation tradition," yet do these contemporary popes regard democracy as a heresy, as popes did in Counter-Reformation days? It is a stretch to say they have the same "absolutist views of papal power" as their 16th-century predecessors.

Additionally, Weiser describes the Jesuits as the "militant arm of the Counter-Reformation [who] sent underground priests to destroy Protestantism in the British Isles." Indeed, these Jesuits, mainly English and Irish priests ordained in France, risked their lives by sneaking back into England to minister, secretly of course, to those who wished to remain Catholic, despite the illegality of hearing and saying Mass. Many of these priests were caught and, after being dragged through the streets, were hanged, drawn, and quartered. But they were not trying to "destroy" Protestantism; rather, they were giving their lives so that Catholic "recusants" could receive the sacraments—a task itself so difficult that even if they had wished to, they would not have had the time or the means to proselytize Protestants, despite the rumors that such subversion was in the works.

Juan C. O'Callahan
Stonington, Conn.

International Flaw

While Jeremy Rabkin makes many good points in "The Fantasy of International Law" (Aug. 21 / Aug. 28), I would like to add to his analogy between international treaties and state laws limiting self-defense: While the state of Connecticut, for example, may limit my response to a home invader, it also takes on the responsibility of my protection. If someone tries to enter my house uninvited, I can call the police to come and evict him.

If the international community is going to limit the actions Israel can take to defend itself, then it is incumbent upon the same community to come to Israel's defense quickly and forcefully.

Aaron Frank
West Hartford, Conn.

Comfort to Enemies

Regarding Paul Hollander's "America by Numbers" (Aug. 21 / Aug. 28): I have noticed that various foreigners' dislike of the United States is often cited in attacks on the Bush administration's foreign policy. These critics usually claim that Bush's policy has fed anti-American hostility, as they lament President Bush's putting an end to those happy days when we had "moral authority." Yet for enemies such as Iran, it is naive to think they would be friendly if only we would stop "wronging" them. The Iranian regime continues to send proxies to attack Israel, which has done nothing to Iran. To Khamenei, Ahmadinejad, et al., Israel's sin is that most of its citizens are Jews—just as America's sin is that many of its people are Christians.

What counts with enemies such as these is their military capability, not their feelings. We would do well to focus on how best to destroy them—and resolve to do it—before they go after us, rather than waste time musing about how we might make them like us better.

Mike Hollins
Los Angeles, Calif.

Correction

Charlotte Allen's review of Richard Schickel's biography of Elia Kazan ("Truth Teller," Aug. 21 / Aug. 28), should have said that the film *On the Waterfront* was set in Hoboken, N.J., not in Brooklyn.

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Incorporating energy efficient technology into new construction could reduce consumption by 40%. Governments and businesses must reduce their own energy use and promote conservation to their citizens and employees. Further improvements in fuel efficiency will play a crucial role, too. And the average person wields incredible power when it comes to conserving energy, from driving slower to switching to more efficient home appliances.

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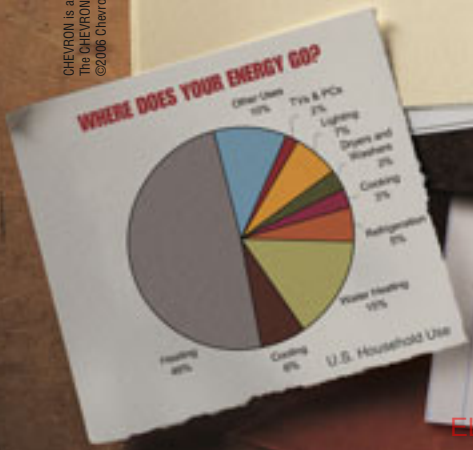

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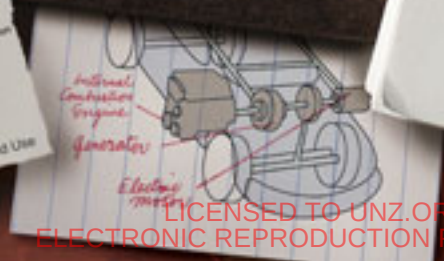

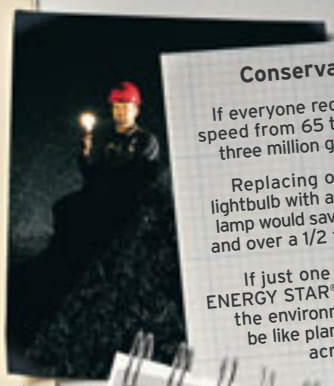

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the weekly Standard

The Plamegate Hall of Shame

The rogues' gallery of those who acted badly in the CIA "leak" case turns out to be different from what the media led us to expect. Note that we put the word "leak" in quotation marks, because it's clear now there was no leak at all, just idle talk, and certainly no smear campaign against Joseph Wilson for criticizing President Bush's Iraq policy. It's as if a giant hoax were perpetrated on the country—by the media, by partisan opponents of the Bush administration, even by several Bush subordinates who betrayed the president and their White House colleagues. The hoax lingered for three years and is only now being fully exposed for what it was. Let's start at the top of the rogues' list:

* **Richard Armitage**, the deputy secretary of state under Colin Powell, was the first to reveal that Wilson's wife was a CIA employee. He blabbed carelessly to Bob Woodward of the *Washington Post*, then to columnist Robert Novak, who mentioned it in a July 2003 column. Armitage, after admitting this to the FBI in October 2003, stood by silently year after year as Vice President Cheney, Cheney's chief of staff Scooter Libby, Karl Rove, and other White House officials were blamed for what he had done, and President Bush suffered politically. Loyalty is not Armitage's strong suit.

* **Colin Powell**, Bush's friend and secretary of state in the first Bush term, knew what Armitage had done and never let on. He met with Bush countless times as the White House was being pummeled in the media and by Democrats for outing a CIA agent to take revenge on her husband. Bush called publicly for the leaker to be identified. Powell knew the identity, but remained silent. Some friend.

* **Patrick Fitzgerald**, the special prosecutor in the "leak" case, was aware of the source of Novak's story when he began his still-ongoing investigation in December 2003. Yet finding that source was supposedly the object of his probe. Now working with a second grand jury, Fitzgerald surely knows the supposed conspiracy to defame Wilson is (and always was) a fantasy. Still he won't let go. Fitzgerald has proved once more why naming a special prosecutor is a colossal mistake.

* **The Ashcroft Justice Department**. Armitage brought his story to investigators after the CIA requested an investigation when the name of Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame, appeared in Novak's column. So when the department decided weeks later to appoint a special prosecutor, it already knew who had "leaked" Plame's name. Attorney General John Ashcroft recused himself, leaving the decision to his deputy, James Comey. Rather than face a torrent of partisan recriminations for dropping the case, Comey passed the buck to Fitzgerald. There were no profiles in courage at Justice.

* **Joseph Wilson**, an ex-ambassador and National Security Council official in the Clinton and Bush I administrations, sparked the "leak" controversy in the first place by writing in the *New York Times* that Bush had lied in his 2003 State of the Union address about Saddam Hussein's seeking uranium in Africa for nuclear weapons. The CIA had sent Wilson to Niger in 2002 to check out precisely that point, and he claimed to have debunked it. Later, the Senate Intelligence Committee concluded that nearly everything Wilson wrote or said about Bush, Cheney, Iraq, and his own trip to Africa was untrue. Wilson was a fraud. "It's unfortunate that so many people took him seriously," the *Washington Post* editorialized sorrowfully last week.

* **The media**—especially the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*—relied heavily on Wilson's reckless and unfounded charges to wage journalistic jihad against the White House and Bush political adviser Karl Rove. Reporters and columnists, based on little more than Joe Wilson's harrumphing, bought the line that the White House "leaked" Plame's name to discredit her husband. In an editorial last January, the *New York Times* said the issue in the case "was whether the White House was using this information in an attempt to silence Mrs. Wilson's husband, a critic of the Iraq invasion, and in doing so violated a federal law against unmasking a covert operative." The paper's answer was yes.

So instead of Cheney or Rove or Libby, the perennial targets of media wrath, the Plamegate Hall of Shame consists of favorites of the Washington elite and the mainstream press. The reaction, therefore, has been zero outrage and minimal coverage. The appropriate step for the press would

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be to investigate and then report in detail how it got the story so wrong, just as the *New York Times* and other media did when they reported incorrectly that WMD were in Saddam's arsenal in Iraq. Don't hold your breath for this.

Not everyone got the story wrong. The Senate Intelligence Committee questioned Wilson under oath. It found that, contrary to his claims, his wife had indeed arranged for the CIA to send him to Niger in 2002. It found that his findings had not, contrary to Wilson's claim, circulated at the highest levels of the administration. And Bush's 16 words in the State of the Union to the effect that British intelligence believed Saddam had sought uranium in Africa—words Wilson insisted were fictitious—had been twice confirmed as true by none other than the British government.

Worse, Wilson failed in the single reason for his trip to Niger: to ferret out the truth about whether Iraq had sought uranium there. Wilson said no, dismissing a visit by Iraqis in 1999. But journalist Christopher Hitchens learned the trade mission was led by an important Iraqi nuclear diplomat. And uranium, of course, was the only thing Niger had to trade.

The fascination in Washington with the idea of a White House conspiracy to ruin Plame's career and punish Wilson never made sense. If there had been one, it had to be the most passive conspiracy in history. The suspected mastermind was Rove, the Bush political adviser. But all Rove did was to acknowledge off-handedly to two reporters that he'd heard that Wilson's wife, whose name he didn't know, was a CIA employee. And the two reporters were more likely to agree with Wilson about the war in Iraq than with the Bush administration. The conspiracy charge, the *Post* rightly concluded, was "untrue."

A few diehards in the media have tried to keep the conspiracy notion alive. Michael Isikoff of *Newsweek* asserts that what Armitage did and what Rove did were separate, and thus a White House smear campaign could still have gone on. Yes, but it didn't. Jeff Greenfield of CNN recalled a *Post* story in September 2003 that said "two top White House officials" had contacted six reporters "and disclosed the identity and occupation of Wilson's wife." But the *Post* itself has in effect repudiated this dubious story.

What's left to do? Fitzgerald, in decency, should terminate his probe immediately. And he should abandon the perjury prosecution of Libby, the former Cheney aide. Libby's foggy memory was no worse than that of Armitage, who forgot for two years to tell Fitzgerald he'd talked to the *Post*'s Woodward but isn't being prosecuted. Last but not least, a few apologies are called for, notably by Powell and Armitage, but also by the press. A correction—perhaps the longest and most overdue in the history of journalism—is in order.

—Fred Barnes, for the Editors

NO LONGER HOLDING WATER

Michael Ramirez

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A Conversion You Can't Refuse

And the Western media can't comprehend.

BY PAUL MARSHALL

THE KIDNAPPING in Gaza of two Fox News reporters, and the significance of their subsequent "conversion" to Islam at gunpoint, vanished from the front pages after their August 27 release. But their story shows three things—that we cannot trust much "news" from the Levant, that much of the media is still oblivious to religion, and that radical Islam is spreading and deepening in Palestinian society as elsewhere in the region.

Steve Centanni, an American, and Olaf Wiig, a New Zealander, were seized on August 14 by the Holy Jihad Brigades, possibly an alias for Zakaria Dughmush's group, also suspected in the June 25 kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilead Shalit, one of the triggers for Israel's attacks in Gaza and Lebanon.

Their plight shows the problems of evaluating reports emanating from areas infested by terrorist groups and authoritarian governments. We know already that some "journalists" are simply propagandists, such as photographer Adnan Hajj, eventually fired by Reuters after his doctoring of photos from Lebanon was exposed.

But a larger problem is that honest local reporters have their lives threatened if they tell the truth. Palestinian journalists have been killed for reporting that reflects adversely on Hamas or Fatah. Many denounced the Fox duo's kidnapping, and two days after their release, dozens of journalists in Gaza demonstrated outside the Palestinian Legislative Council offices, demanding an end to the intimidation that cripples their work. Centanni and Wiig made headlines because they worked for an American broadcaster: The suppression of local reporters is all too frequently ignored.

The coverage also showed the continuing cluelessness of much of our media when it comes to religion, despite its growing influence in all Middle Eastern conflicts. Centanni and Wiig were not merely kidnapped but also—something new in the Palestinian areas—forced to announce that they had converted to Islam as a condition not only of their release but of their survival.

The significance of this forced conversion has been downplayed in the media. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* even pronounced the two "unharmed" on release. This judgment is perverse. If Muslim prisoners in American custody were forced to convert to Christianity on pain of death or as a condition of release, the press would denounce it as virtual torture, and rightly so: No sane person would say the prisoners had suffered no harm.

This blindness also trivializes religion. Many people would sooner die than deny the commitments that shape their lives. Such beliefs lie near the heart of Christian doctrines of martyrdom, especially in the Middle East. In the Donatist controversy, the church was fractured over the question of whether and how to readmit those who under threat had denied their faith. In recent years, Christians in Sudan, Iran, Nigeria, and Indonesia have accepted death at the hands of Islamist extremists rather than convert to Islam.

And Centanni and Wiig remain at risk—like the writer Salman Rushdie, marked for death by Islamists who deem his writing blasphemous, or Abdul Rahman, a Christian convert forced to flee Afghanistan earlier this year. The two journalists, having announced their conversion, now must live as Muslims lest some imam declare them apostate and his followers take it upon themselves to carry out a sentence of death.

These conversions illustrate the growing force of radical Islam. They come against the background of wider assaults on Christians. There have been firebombings of a parish school in Ramallah, of the YMCA office in Qalqilya, of the First Baptist Church in Bethlehem, and of the home of Samir Qumsieh, who heads the only private Christian TV station in the Palestinian areas.

Hamas's explicit goal is to institute a state based on extreme sharia law. If that comes to pass, the rights of non-Muslims will be radically curtailed, and they will be required to pay a special tax, the *jizya*. Last year, Bethlehem councilor Hassan Al Masalmeh declared the authorities' intention to implement such a tax. The preamble to Hamas's 1988 founding covenant declares that not only Jews but also Christians "are smitten with vileness wheresoever they are found" unless they submit to Muslim rule and sharia. Article 13 emphasizes, "The Jews will never be pleased with you, neither the Christians, until you follow their religion."

We can expect to see more forced conversions, and other travesties, as spreading radical Islam shapes not only terrorist groups but also governments, and we need the religious education to understand it. Currently, as reporting on the Fox duo shows, much of the media is intellectually unequipped to report on the Muslim world. ♦

Paul Marshall is senior fellow at Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom and the editor of, most recently, Radical Islam's Rules: The Worldwide Spread of Extreme Shari'a Law *(Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).*

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"Der Terror Ist Da"

Germany wakes up, sort of.

BY JEFFREY GEDMIN

Berlin

A COLLEAGUE TELLS ME of a friend who was at the Hamburg train station during a recent bomb scare. Passengers, evacuated from the suspect train, were quite upset—about the delay. No one took the threat seriously. I confess to my own mundane thoughts in a similar situation. I was at the Zurich airport last month departing for London when the news came that flights to Britain were cancelled because the Brits had thwarted a major terrorist plot. My first thought was, How in the world will I ever get my checked suitcase back?

This summer's thwarted plot to blow up two trains in Germany has started a long overdue debate here about the nature of the terrorist threat. Until now the conventional wisdom has been that Germany was immune from Islamic terrorism because Gerhard Schröder kept the country out of the Iraq war. Britain was attacked because Tony Blair is a poodle of the Americans. Spain suffered attacks because José María Aznar helped remove Saddam Hussein from power. This is all nonsense, of course. The Canadians uncovered a plot this summer in which terrorists sought to attack the parliament and behead the prime minister. Canada was against the Iraq invasion. Al Qaeda has murdered innocents in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country, which opposed the Iraq war.

Alexander Ritzmann, a talented young Free Democratic member of the Berlin senate, says it will still take some time for Germans to get the picture: "It's not what we do, it's who we are that makes us a target." Ritzmann calls this "the central reality Germany has been avoiding." Last week, he gave his own plea on the floor of the Berlin senate for Germany to wake up. To be sure, Chancellor Angela Merkel has already had a sobering effect on the German foreign policy and security debate. Merkel is empirical, a scientist by training. Last February at the annual international security conference in Munich, an Iranian official stood up and informed her that Iran has a law requiring it to enrich uranium. "Then change the law," she said.

The Schröder era was not a complete wasteland. Otto Schily, the dour interior minister—a Green turned Social Democrat—was tough as nails and proved a serious ally for the United States and others. But the debate about Islamic terrorism during those years was mostly silly and irresponsible. Mathias Döpfner, the chairman and CEO of the Springer publishing company, wrote a searing column a couple years ago in which he argued that the German debate had been reduced to the goofy and lazy formula "Bush is dumb and bad."

The events of the summer have at least gotten Germans' attention. The first of four arrested was a 21-year-old Lebanese student in Kiel named Youssef Mohammed E.H. On July 31, he had planted bombs aboard two commuter trains on their way to Koblenz and Dortmund. The bombs failed to explode. Nothing has been concluded, but it appears that there might have been an al Qaeda connection. Last week *Stern* magazine announced that "Der Terror ist da!" ("Terror is here"). *Der Spiegel*'s latest cover story is on the new German angst. But the debate "has still not really heated up," says Ritzmann. "We still need a huge step," he adds.

There are those who have been trying. The most important, perhaps, has been Hans Magnus Enzensberger, one of the country's leading literary figures and social critics. Enzensberger debated the Iraq war with another of Germany's leading intellectuals, Jürgen Habermas. Habermas insisted that Europe, with its superior humanistic values, go its separate way from America. Enzensberger vigorously dissented in the pages of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.

Earlier this year, Enzensberger published "Men of Terror," an essay on "the Radical Loser." Enzensberger blames neither poverty nor George W. Bush for the scourge of Islamic terror. He sees its roots in an intolerant vision of Islam, traceable to the Muslim Brotherhood's founding in Egypt in the 1920s. The essay quotes generously from the U.N. Human Development Report and concludes that massive deficits in education and self-government in the Arab world have helped create an incubator for the dreadful complexes of inferiority and alienation that produce the "radical loser." Enzensberger's essay is a big step toward serious debate. But otherwise the state of discourse has been underwhelming. Germany's most celebrated Middle East hand, an elderly eccentric author and journalist named Peter Scholl-Latour, has argued al Qaeda is a trumped-up rag-tag team mostly invented by the Americans.

The good news in all this? A majority of Germans now say they see a real threat. But then the Brits do, too. Eighty percent say yes to the war on terror, but chiefly through more hawkish domestic policies and not in alliance with the United States. Just wait until Tony Blair's exit to see how bad things can become. We can only hope Angela Merkel will step up. Europe needs a serious debate, and only serious leadership will bring it about. ♦

Jeffrey Gedmin is director of the Aspen Institute Berlin and a columnist for Die Welt.

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Urban Renewal, Mugabe Style

Bulldozing your political enemies.

BY JAMES KIRCHICK

Harare, Zimbabwe

TO PRESIDENT Robert Mugabe, Fungayi Lameck is a piece of trash. Last summer, like hundreds of thousands of other destitute Zimbabweans, Lameck saw his home in a poor Harare neighborhood destroyed in what the government termed "Operation Murambatsvina," Shona for "Operation Wipe Out Trash."

Mugabe claimed the operation was a revolutionary new method of urban renewal. Families had 30 minutes' warning before their homes were bulldozed. He labeled the campaign "a vigorous clean-up campaign to restore sanity," which, if Mugabe's own erratic behavior over the past year is any sign, has yet to show results. Talk to any Zimbabwean not on the payroll of Mugabe's political fiefdom—the Zimbabwean African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)—and you hear a different story. The purpose was to drive out the urban poor, with whom Mugabe is least popular. In the countryside, their political power will be diluted, and they will likely starve. The United Nations estimates that Operation Murambatsvina affected over 2.5 million Zimbabweans.

Now Lameck—a father of four who considers himself lucky to have found a job in a country with 80 percent unemployment and where millions have fled for neighboring South Africa—earns $10 a month on a construction crew building a ZANU-PF provincial minister's mansion. Lameck said that he and his fellow workers "told [the minister] our plight, he saw it, he did nothing." Lameck and his family live in a makeshift plastic shelter donated by Catholic Relief Services in the black township of Hatcliffe, an area cleared in the operation yet where many victims of the demolitions have now relocated. Until recently, Lameck could look forward to UNICEF trucks that would come to Hatcliffe three times a day with clean water; now, UNICEF officials have told Hatcliffe residents they can come only intermittently because of threats from the government. At the time of our interview, Lameck had not seen a UNICEF truck for a week. He is 36 years old, but could pass for 50.

If Operation Murambatsvina was intended to shore up Mugabe's hold on power, then there is no doubt it was a success. Mugabe, who has ruled Zimbabwe since it won independence from Ian Smith's white minority government in 1980, had justifiably lost a great deal of popularity with the poor here especially because of his disastrous economic policies. Beginning in 2000, he spurred on the widespread seizures of white-owned farms by veterans of the country's war of independence. As the arbitrary and sometimes violent seizures continued unabated for years, the Zimbabwean economy—which is almost entirely agricultural—collapsed.

Zimbabwe's rate of inflation now stands at just under 1,000 percent per month (it reached a high of 1,185 percent in June), the highest in the world. One would be hard pressed to find an economist worth his Ph.D. who thinks that Mugabe's latest gambit to reduce inflation—lopping three zeroes off the nation's currency and printing new bills—will do anything to alleviate the disaster.

The sad part is that Zimbabwe was not just another failed African state—at least not until recently. Mugabe resisted the temptation to expel white farmers in the 1980s, and agricultural production in this lush country soared. Genuinely committed to education, Mugabe's Zimbabwe posted literacy rates of 85 percent, and Zimbabweans were known as the continent's best educated. So the subsequent decline has been catastrophic.

Nonetheless, in spite of massive food and oil shortages, one does not see the signs of internal rebellion brewing in Harare. This is partly because Zimbabwe is what Natan Sharansky might refer to as a "fear society." As I was about to call a spokesman for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) from a hotel phone, my guide, one of the few independent journalists left in the country, quickly intervened: "I wouldn't advise that."

Uniformed members of the Zimbabwean Republican Police, as well as plainclothes officers in the dreaded Central Intelligence Organization, regularly patrol Hatcliffe to deter any sort of political activity and to prevent Western journalists from interviewing its disgruntled inhabitants. A police cordon has been erected on the main road leading into the township, and young thugs, members of the ZANU-PF youth, loudly roam the roads. An eerie sense of order pervades the city. As Mugabe has a firm grip on the military and police forces (they are among the few people in the country receiving any semblance of a regular paycheck), there is seemingly small chance of an overthrow.

Foreign journalists are banned from entering Zimbabwe (officially, I entered as a student), and some high-profile detentions and deportations, most notably of *Guardian* correspondent Andrew Meldrum in 2003, have dissuaded foreign news organizations from basing correspondents in Harare, opting instead for local stringers who write anonymously. In

James Kirchick is a Boston-based writer traveling in southern Africa.

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the words of MDC spokesman Nelson Chamisa (whom I had to interview at an empty gas station owned by an MDC sympathizer), "an iron curtain has been put around this country."

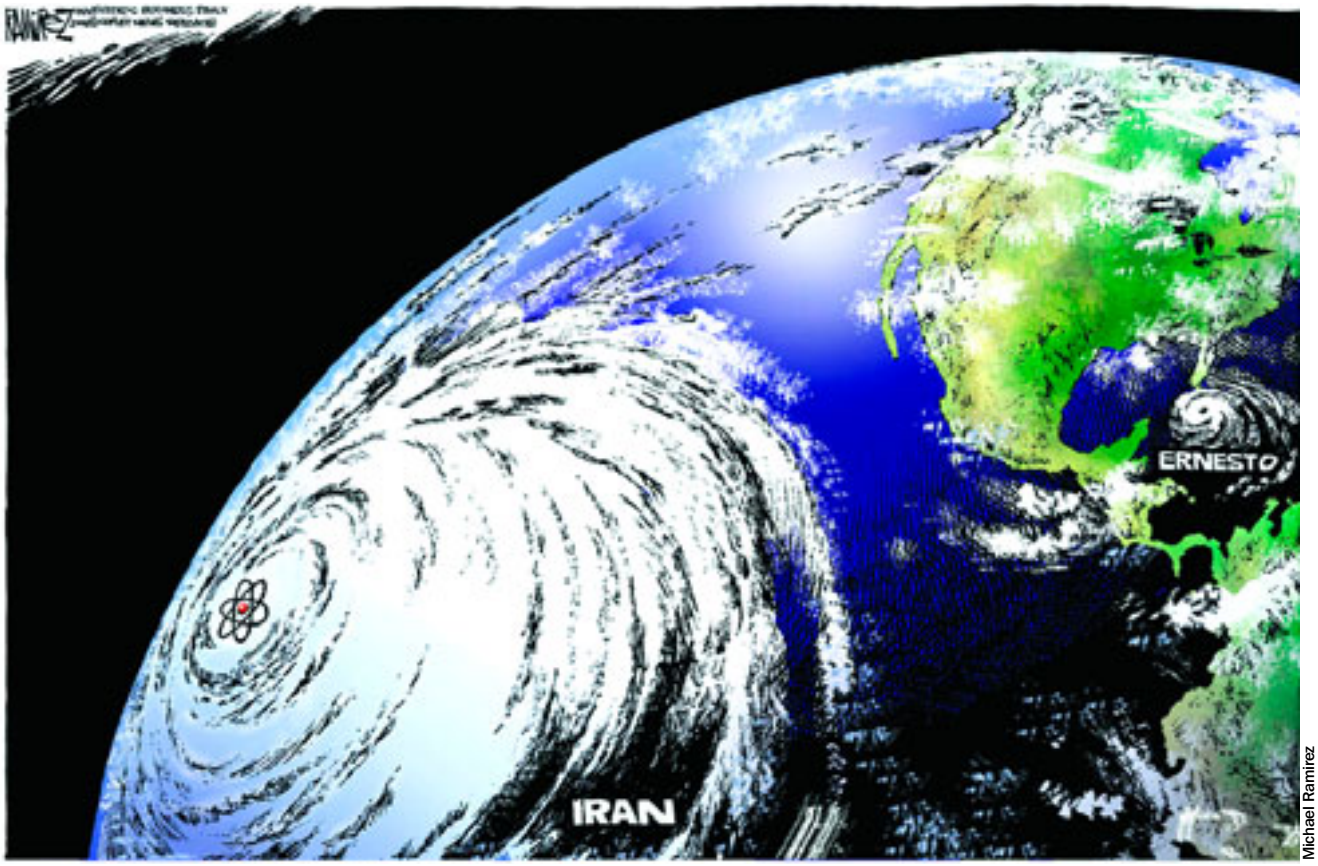
Though Mugabe prides himself as a liberation leader who freed his people from white rule, the country today resembles apartheid-era South Africa in important respects. In November 1952, the government of Prime Minister Daniel F. Malan issued a proclamation that banned meetings of more than 10 blacks. In the run-up to the most recent presidential election in 2002, the Zimbabwean government passed the Public Order and Security Act, which has allowed Mugabe to shut down opposition meetings whenever and wherever he likes. Having quit the British Commonwealth and been hit with Western sanctions, Zimbabwe has achieved the same international pariah status that apartheid South Africa once faced—except Mugabe still counts many friends in Africa.

Closest among them continues to be South African president Thabo Mbeki. Nary a word of criticism has emerged from his lips during seven years as president of Africa's economic powerhouse and supposed bastion of democracy. Itai Zimunya, advocacy officer for the USAID-funded Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, called South African support for Mugabe in 2002 elections "an endorsement of violence." And the endorsements have been unceasing. On August 9, South Africa's Women's Day, the ANC government welcomed Zimbabwe's vice president, Joyce Mujuru, as a guest of honor.

As a columnist in the antigovernment *Financial Gazette* aptly put it last month, "Robert Mugabe faces a greater risk of being savaged by a dead lamb than getting even the mildest censure from his fellow South African heads of state and government."

Still, Zimbabwe's problems are also Mbeki's. His continued support for Mugabe has only exacerbated the economic crisis in the north and thus encouraged the massive influx of refugees that his own government deports at a rate of 2,000 a week. Chamisa, the MDC spokesman, says, "The tragedy of solidarity on the continent is that it's a solidarity of the leadership rather than a solidarity of the people." Because Mugabe aided Mbeki's African National Congress in the struggle against apartheid, there is no chance that Mbeki or any black South African political leader of note will openly condemn him, never mind work toward his removal from power.

As for Fungayi Lameck and the hundreds of thousands of others who have been homeless for over a year, Mugabe announced a plan not long after the implementation of Murambatsvina to build new homes for those displaced: Operation Garikai, or "Stay Well." In typical Marxist fashion, this grand state plan has produced meager, even perverse, results. Instead of building homes for those whose shelter Mugabe destroyed, it has forced men like Lameck to construct mansions for the ruling elite. ♦



Michael Ramirez

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Up and Adam

The irresistible rise of Rep. Putnam.

BY JILLIAN BANDES

AP / Dennis Cook

Putnam with four-month-old daughter Elizabeth on the floor of the House, January 2003

IN 2001, when he was 26, Adam Putnam found himself the youngest member of Congress. He was nicknamed "Opie"—for his thick red hair and youthful appearance—and was generally sized up as inexperienced. Five years later, the Florida conservative is chairman of the Republican Policy Committee, the fifth most powerful position in the Republican House leadership.

Now 33, Putnam is known less for his youth than for his political skill. Says House majority whip Roy Blunt, "He understands his business, he's great at working with the members, and he's patient."

These qualities may be the primary reason for Putnam's quick rise, but according to Rep. Clay Shaw, a fellow Florida Republican, Putnam has enjoyed a little help along the way: He was more ambitious than most members of Florida's large Republican delegation, and Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert took a liking to him as soon as the congressman arrived in Washington.

"He really caught the speaker's eye," Shaw said. Indeed, Hastert recalled his first impression of Putnam as "nobody's fool." Says Hastert, "He was articulate, knew the issues on both a national basis and local issues, and he was good at it. He had a sort of down-home presentation, too. He understood the real issues that people care about."

Hastert recognized Putnam's leadership potential. "I think he has the background that can put him anywhere he wants to go in the future," says the speaker.

Putnam has been able to dodge questions about his breadth of experience with a careful mix of respect and initiative. He speaks casually when talking about his record as a legislator and underscores the importance of hard work.

"You know, everybody comes to these jobs with some kind of limited life experience, whatever they do," Putnam told me. "I was going into this admitting that these were my life experiences, and that I'm going to work day in and day out to make the best decisions for this district."

First elected to the Florida House of Representatives at 22, Putnam now wields influence in the international arena as well as on the domestic front. High on the policy committee's docket has been the Iranian nuclear crisis, an issue on which Putnam has worked closely with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and U.N. Ambassador John Bolton. He is responsible for keeping his party members abreast of the Iranian nuclear threat.

"If they fall behind on the learning curve, and we haven't prepared members with the intellectual ammunition, they don't have the information they need to make the good decisions," he told me. "The U.N. utterly failed in dealing with Iraq; I think the U.N. will fail in dealing with Iran. So, what's the new international institution that recognizes how the world has changed since World War II? That functions? That's pragmatic?"

The way Putnam is building up the Republican Policy Committee, it's almost as if he sees it as the alternative. A fierce defender of U.S. power and American military intervention, Putnam has reshaped the committee to function as an information exchange. His leadership can be credited with a dramatic increase in attendance at policy committee meetings, furthering the value of the work done there.

"He has a very good manner with members," said Hastert. "He has the ability to talk to them and communi-

Jillian Bandes was an intern at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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cate with them, and the ability to do that with the press."

Putnam's idealism in foreign affairs is second only to his dedication to lowering taxes and maintaining a free market system. His fiscal record is solidly conservative: He's voted "yes" on every tax cut that's come before him in Congress, and initiated the first-ever Republican Policy Committee public hearing on tax reform at the beginning of June. He recently sponsored legislation to prevent natural gas drilling off the coast of Florida.

Putnam is an avid outdoorsman and lay minister in his hometown Episcopal church. He and his wife Melissa have three children, with a fourth on the way. Whether because of his dedication to family life, his conservative voting record, or the fact that his family has lived in Florida for five generations, his older constituents are enthusiastic. When the University of Florida graduate first ran for office, retirement communities welcomed him, praising his initiative, Putnam said, and showing their willingness to take a chance on a younger representative.

He might not have such smooth sailing on one issue, though. His position on immigration places him squarely between the president and House Republicans. His sympathy for workers in a district whose economy revolves around agriculture and ranching prevents him from signing onto the get-tough House bill, which would make illegal immigrants guilty of a felony. But Putnam insists immigration is an issue that needs to be approached pragmatically.

"We need to find a way to put people in jobs who are willing to perform those tasks in a way that is legal and makes taxpayers happy," he told me. "And if there's a way to do that without making them citizens, that's the most preferable."

Few doubt Putnam's ability to overcome the legislative deadlock on this issue—or, perhaps, any other. Says Blunt, "I see him doing anything here he wants to do if he has the patience to stay and do it." ♦

1936 and All That

Why the Spanish Civil War is like Iraq, and vice versa. BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

JOSEPH LIEBERMAN, Democratic senator from Connecticut and independent candidate for a new term, shared a remarkable insight in Hartford on August 22. He commented, in an interview with talk radio host Glenn Beck, "Iraq, if you look back at it, is going to be like the Spanish Civil War, which was the harbinger of what was to come."

The Spanish strife of 1936-39 remains, seventy years after it began, one of the central incidents of the century we lately left behind. And it offers numerous precedents for the global war on terror.

Lieberman probably intended to express little more than the standard informed opinion on Spain's war—that the Western democracies made the Second World War inevitable by failing to save the Spanish Republic from rightist dictator Gen. Francisco Franco, who was a proxy for Hitler and Mussolini.

The aptness of the Spain-Iraq parallel has struck others. The same day as Lieberman made his comment, a British paper, the *Citizen*, editorialized: "[T]he Spanish Civil War, besides presaging the Second World War, had important repercussions. . . . [T]hose who question what has happened today in recent zones of conflict, especially Israel-Lebanon, could do no better than undertake a revisitation of history which could teach all of us some useful lessons about the threats of fascism, totalitarianism and religious extremism." Labour member of the House of Commons Denis MacShane, who happens to be the biographer of former Tory prime minister Edward Heath, recently argued that Britain should have intervened in Spain on the side of the republic and noted that Heath held the same view.

Similarly, on August 18, Heritage Foundation analyst Ariel Cohen, writing in the *Washington Times*, compared pro-Hezbollah demonstrators in Washington to the "Fifth Column . . . the pro-fascist forces in Republican Madrid during the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s. Today's Fifth Column glorifies the global jihad against the West." And a few days before that, radical Islam expert Daniel Pipes, on the Lou Dobbs show, likened the Hezbollah-Israel war to "the Spanish Civil War as a precursor to World War II."

The argument is a powerful and correct one, although it has its subtleties and flaws. First, Iraq is not now in a state of civil war. Wide-scale, continuous combat between major internal forces has not started in Iraq. And it may not, thanks to the overwhelming demographic weight of the Shia Muslims, a majority of whom are committed to the new Iraqi state.

But the analogy with the Spanish Civil War does not depend on the existence of an unrestrained military struggle between Iraqi factions. The Spain-Iraq parallel contains a deeper lesson for the present. The Spanish Civil War was the first major example of the modern phenomenon of proxy wars, in which local clashes are exploited, and third countries torn apart, in the competition between regional and global alliances. Spain was not a simple war of conquest and pillage, like the contemporaneous Japanese invasion of China and Italian assault on Ethiopia. Rather, Spain represented a confrontation between the politics of the past, represented by Franco, and the politics of the

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future, embodied in a confused but nonetheless genuine Republic.

Franco was not a true fascist—his system had very few of the sociological or ideological characteristics of Mussolini's and Hitler's party-states. Rather, Franco was a soldier bent on preventing a social revolution by means of a coup. Nevertheless, the Franco cause was profoundly identified with fascism, because Germany lent the Spanish general the best elements of the Nazi air force, and Italy sent thousands of soldiers to fight alongside Franco's troops. But neither was the Spanish Republican cause stainless. It was the victim of subversion by its alleged ally, the Soviet Union, and many of its strongest supporters considered democracy a bourgeois fraud.

Yet the historical dynamics of internal discord and international engagement show a persistent pattern from then to now. Spain, like Iraq, was a country without a firm national identity. In Spain, the Castilian aristocracy controlled the state, most of the tax income, the army, and the Catholic Church—the latter an ideological pillar of the old order. As if cast from an identical historical mold, Iraq long suffered under the corrupt and brutal rule of the Sunni elite, which used its clerical wing to help maintain its power.

Spanish entrepreneurship and economic development were most advanced in the Basque and Catalan regions, whose cultural affiliations with the Madrid monarchy were weakened. In corresponding fashion, the Iraqi Kurds have leaped far ahead in modernization, yet like the Basques and Catalans, they are culturally and linguistically distinct from, and resentful of, the Iraqi Arabs.

Spain in 1936 included a vast and turbulent mass of radical industrial workers and farm laborers whose political culture was mainly anarchist, and whose aspirations were barely perceived, much less understood, in the outside world. Iraq's Shia majority resembles the Spanish anarchists—there are many of them, they are militant, and they often seem to have no friends. So the Iraqi Shias, like the Spanish left, are enticed into a dangerous courtship with a totalitarian suitor: Iran plays the role in Basra that Russian Stalinism had in Barcelona.

Spain at war, like Iraq, became an arena for massacres and militias, hostage-taking and disappearances, assassinations and reprisals. The Franco forces murdered the poet Federico Garcia Lorca; Soviet agents who infiltrated the Republican police killed a dissident Catalan Marxist author, Andreu Nin. The competing ideologies in Spain also included Carlism, an extreme form of monarchism, as well as anarchism, no less volatile than the cruel doctrines of Wahhabism, the inspirer of the late Abu Musab al Zarqawi, and the Shia extremism of Moktada al-Sadr. And as Germany and Italy helped Franco, so elements in Saudi Arabia finance and recruit Sunni terrorists to kill in Iraq, while Iran supports Iraqi Shia paramilitary expansion.

These correlates are not limited to the Spanish and Iraqi hostilities—they apply to the main historical chapters since Spain. The Spanish war anticipated Communist-run civil wars during the late 1940s, in Greece and in various Asian countries including China, India, Burma, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, and, of course, Indochina. The pattern continued through Central America and Africa in the last years of the Soviet empire. The Spanish war had its most dramatic repetition, until now, in the former Yugoslavia. Think of the Serbs as equivalent to Castilians in Spain and Sunnis in Iraq, and the original motif reappears.

But the main points of resemblance between Spain and Iraq—and even Lebanon under the menace of Hezbollah—remain the role of the international powers, the great contention between oppression and liberation, and the threat of a later, wider war. When France, which had a leftist government in the late '30s, and Britain, which should have served as a sentinel against Nazi interference beyond Germany's borders, together accepted an embargo on arms to the Spanish Republic, Hitler was encouraged beyond measure in his plans for the subjugation of all Europe. These days, the pusillanimity of European leaders allows Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah chief, to threaten the complete destruction of the nascent Lebanese democracy while also attacking the citizens of northern Israel.

In Iraq, unlike in Spain, the United States, almost alone but for Britain, has undertaken the heavy task of leading the world's democratic faithful against the acolytes of terror, who are now driven by Islamofascism rather than its antecedents, the antidemocratic ideologies of the 1930s. That is the ultimate lesson of Spain in 1936 and Iraq in 2006: By winning the battle of Iraq, and by fostering real change in Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Iran, the democratic nations may save the world from a later, longer, bloodier, and more terrible war.

In the Spanish Civil War, Albert Camus wrote, he and those like him "learned that one can be right and be beaten." Let us hope that, so many decades later, Sen. Lieberman and those like him are not alone in this understanding: that we are right, and that we will not be beaten. ♦

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Human Rights Watch vs. Human Rights

The cynical manipulation of a worthy cause has a history

By Joshua Muravchik

Just three weeks after Hezbollah invaded Israel, kidnapping two Israeli soldiers and causing the deaths of eight others, Human Rights Watch issued a 49-page report about the war that had been ignited by this attack. The title of the report was *Fatal Strikes: Israel's Indiscriminate Attacks Against Civilians in Lebanon*. "Our research shows that Israel's claim that Hezbollah fighters are hiding among civilians does not explain, let alone justify, Israel's indiscriminate warfare," declared Kenneth Roth, executive director of the New York-based nongovernmental organization. "In some cases, these attacks constitute war crimes," the group concluded. Then it added the most damning charge of all: "In some instances, Israeli forces appear to have deliberately targeted civilians."

Human Rights Watch did not claim that its representatives were present when any of these alleged crimes occurred. Rather, the report explained that its information was gleaned from interviewing "eye-witnesses and survivors" of Israeli strikes who "told Human Rights Watch that neither Hezbollah fighters nor other legitimate military targets were in the area that the IDF attacked." To reinforce its interpretation, the report added that when Human Rights Watch investigators arrived at the various scenes, they did not see "any signs of military activity in the area[s] attacked, such as trenches, destroyed rocket launchers, other military equipment, or dead or wounded fighters."

There was of course no dependable method by which Human Rights Watch could assess the veracity of what it was told by the "witnesses." Indeed, there was no means by which it could be sure that they were not Hezbollah cadres, since members of the group do not ordinarily wear uniforms or display identity badges. As for the absence of physical signs of Hezbollah's presence at bomb sites, the report seemed to assume that the group would have left in place damaged weapons and fallen and injured comrades during the hours, or more likely days, that passed before HRW's investigators arrived at each site. For the especially grave accusation that civilian deaths were inflicted "deliberately," no evidence was offered. Civilians were hit, of course, and individuals claiming to be witnesses denied Hezbollah had been in the area.

A couple of weeks earlier, Human Rights Watch had issued a press release criticizing Hezbollah's bombardment of the Israeli city of Haifa. "Attacking civilian areas indiscriminately is a serious violation of international humanitarian law and can constitute a war crime," it said before going on to chastise both sides. This hedged judgment ("can constitute") contrasted with the group's unequivocal statement that Israel was guilty of war crimes. Only after its broadside against Israel evoked angry retorts from Israel's sympathizers did Human Rights Watch sharpen its criticism of Hezbollah to make it as plain as its criticism of Israel. "Lobbing rockets blindly into civilian areas is without doubt a war crime," clarified Roth.

Still, Human Rights Watch did not issue any report about the attacks against Israel perpetrated by Hezbollah, although these amounted to several thousand missiles fired blatantly at civilian targets, every one of them an unambiguous war crime. The warheads of these missiles, moreover, were packed with ball bearings, which are of minimal use against military targets but intended to maximize harm to civilians, this in itself constituting in each instance an additional probable war crime. Such criticisms of Hezbollah as passed the lips of Human Rights Watch came in the few brief words of press releases, while its bitter condemnation of Israel came in the lengthy report as well as in numerous shorter documents.

The decision by Human Rights Watch to treat Israel as the main culprit in this war also entailed a studied refusal to make basic moral and legal distinctions. The group did

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not differentiate between Hezbollah's action in initiating the conflict and Israel's reaction in self-defense, nor between Hezbollah's openly announced and quite deliberate targeting of civilians and Israel's alleged indiscriminate firing that caused civilian casualties despite Israel's appeals to Lebanese civilians to evacuate areas it intended to bombard.

Most remarkably, Human Rights Watch did not take note of the contrasting goals of the combatants. Hezbollah's declared aim, in the words of its "spiritual" leader, Sheikh Fadlallah, is to "obliterate" Israel, while Israel's goal boiled down to not being obliterated. Human Rights Watch justifies this self-imposed moral blindness on the grounds that its touchstone is law, not morality. But why, then, was it deafeningly silent on the overriding legal issue that the conflict presented—namely, genocide?

International human rights law consists mostly of multilateral treaties, called conventions. The most fundamental and important of these treaties, because it concerns the ultimate offense against human rights, is the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Presumably because of the weightiness of the issue and the overwhelming moral stakes, its enforcement provisions differ from those of most other human rights treaties. The usual treaty is simply a pledge of good behavior: Each signatory state promises to undertake or refrain from certain acts within its own jurisdiction. But the Genocide Convention enjoins its parties "to prevent and to punish" genocide wherever it may occur and whoever commits it. In other words, when a state signs, for example, the Convention on Racial Discrimination, it promises to stamp out this abomination within its borders, but when it signs the Genocide Convention, it in effect promises to go to war to stop someone else from committing genocide. (This explains the 1994 decision by the Clinton White House not to call the mass murder in Rwanda "genocide," for fear that this would obligate the United States to take action to stop it.)

The convention defines "genocide" as any of a variety of acts "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such." Clearly, Hezbollah's announced goal of obliterating the state of Israel constitutes the intent to destroy a "national group," namely, Israelis. Even if one were to consider that destroying Israel is not the same as destroying the Jewish people, Hezbollah stands no less guilty under the terms of the convention. Some Hezbollah apologists might claim that the group intends only, as its spokesmen sometimes say, to drive the Jews "back" to Europe, i.e., that it intends "merely" ethnic cleansing, not genocide. But even if such a statement of intent is given credence, the reasoning is fatuous. Most Israeli Jews did not come from Europe. They either are native born or come from Arab countries where they would not be taken back and where they would find no safety if they were.

And if such casuistic arguments needed further refutation, there is the eloquent testimony of Hezbollah's antipersonnel missiles fired at Israeli civilians. As Hezbollah's Sheikh Fadlallah puts it: "There are no innocent Jews in Palestine." Nor is that all. Hezbollah's strongman, Hassan Nasrallah, has affirmed that Hezbollah's target is not only the Jews of Palestine. "If they [the Jews] all gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide," he declared in 2002, according to a report in Lebanon's *Daily Star*, the accuracy of which is not disputed.

Such words are not mere bluster. In addition to its assaults on Israelis, Hezbollah has murdered other Jews. In the mid-1980s, acting under the front name Organization of the Oppressed on Earth, Hezbollah kidnapped and murdered several of the few dozen native Jews who still lived in Lebanon. It was also Hezbollah, according to investigators, that carried out the 1994 bombing of the Jewish Center in Buenos Aires that killed 85 and wounded more than 300 others.

As it happened, nearly half of the civilians slaughtered by Hezbollah's missiles in the recent conflagration were not Jews, but Israeli Arabs. This prompted Nasrallah to issue a personal appeal to Arabs to evacuate Haifa so that only Jews would be killed. In sum, from whichever angle you examine it, whether to obliterate Israel or to kill Jews, Hezbollah is an operation whose purpose is genocide. For this reason, disarming Hezbollah should not fall to Israel alone. It is the legal obligation of every one of the 137 state parties to the Genocide Convention.

None of this, however, drew the attention of Human Rights Watch or diverted it from its main mission of attacking Israel. It is a mission that predates the recent crisis.

Last year an Israel-based project called NGO Monitor released a study of the statements and documents on the Middle East issued by Human Rights Watch in 2004. It found that these had amounted to 33 separate documents about Israel, 19 about Egypt, 11 each about Iran and Saudi Arabia, 5 about the Palestinian authority, and 4 each about Syria and Libya. By what scale, one wonders, did Israel warrant eight times as much attention as Syria or Libya? The latter two ranked a rock bottom 7 on the Freedom House scale (1 to 7) of freedom, making them two of the eight most repressive regimes in the world.

Of course, merely counting the number of documents issued about a country is a crude measure of Human Rights Watch's work. For one thing, not all documents are equally long or detailed, as we have seen in the current Lebanon

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war. In search of a more sensitive measure, NGO Monitor assigned weights to different kinds of HRW documents—press releases, "background briefings," "reports," etc.—to reflect their length and detail. When all these numbers were added up, however, the results were about the same as the results of just counting documents. The weighted score of the attention paid to Israel came to 145, while for Syria the weighted score was 23 and for Libya, 13.

The study then applied one further refinement. Not all Human Rights Watch documents are wholly critical of the country in question. Some herald positive developments, such as the relaxation of government repression, while others are mixed, commenting on positive as well as negative developments. To assess the tenor of the documents aimed at the various Middle Eastern countries, NGO Monitor classified their titles. Here are some examples of what it called "critical" titles: "Israel: Budget Discriminates Against Arab Citizens," or "Israel: West Bank Barrier Violates Human Rights." And here is an example of what it called a "noncritical" title: "Egypt: Emergency Court Acquits Political Dissident." NGO Monitor found that of the 33 documents aimed at Israel, 76 percent had critical titles. Of the 19 aimed at Egypt, the proportion was 63 percent. The share of documents with critical titles for other regional countries was: Iran 64 percent, Saudi Arabia 64 percent, Palestinian Authority 40 percent, Libya 75 percent, and Syria 50 percent. Of all the countries in the region, not only was Israel singled out by Human Rights Watch for the most attention, but also for the highest share of negative attention. In the same period that Human Rights Watch issued 25 separate documents with critical titles aimed at Israel, it issued exactly 2 such aimed at Syria.

NGO Monitor found that the disproportionate focus on Israel lessened in 2005, perhaps in response to its own criticism of HRW, but still bore no reasonable relation to the degree and frequency of abuses by the Israeli government in comparison with those of others in the region. Then in 2006, with the war in Lebanon, the previous pattern reemerged.

Manifestly, the work of Human Rights Watch on the Middle East is motivated less by concern for human rights than by the goal of damning Israel. Why this might be is not self-evident. But it perpetuates a long tradition of the appropriation of human rights terminology by groups and individuals whose true goals lie elsewhere, often quite far afield.

Consider, for example, that most venerable of American rights-protection organizations, the American Civil Liberties Union. Many of its early leaders expressed open sympathy for Soviet communism, and one of those founders, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, was also a leader of the Communist Party USA throughout Stalin's tyranny. (One may infer that this particular "civil libertarian" dreamed of an America in which millions of recalcitrant, bourgeois "enemies of the people" would be shot or dispatched to prison camps.) The gradual disillusionment of other ACLU leaders with the Soviet Union intensified with the Stalin-Hitler pact, and in 1940 they decided to expel Flynn from their ranks. This marked a triumph for the sincere civil libertarians over those who used the ACLU for ulterior motives. It was not, however, to be the final chapter.

In the 1960s and '70s, the group took a sharp tack to the left. It began with the New York City teachers' strike of 1968. The strike was precipitated by a purge of union members carried out by black radicals who had taken over a local school board. Insofar as there were civil liberties aspects to the confrontation, the victims were the teachers whose rights to due process and freedom of association had been trampled. But in a stunning inversion, the head of the ACLU's New York branch, Aryeh Neier, aligned the organization against the teachers. To Neier, the crucial priority was to stand with the black revolutionaries, civil liberties be damned.

This split the ACLU, with many of the true civil libertarians leaving, thus facilitating Neier's efforts to turn the organization into more of a multipurpose agitational group for leftist causes. The new posture was consecrated in 1976, when the group voted to rehabilitate Flynn (who had gone on to become the national chairman of the Communist party and died in the USSR). In a ritual reminiscent of Soviet bloc politics, she was posthumously restored to a position of honor in the ACLU.

Neier would soon broaden his ambit to international affairs. The rise of human rights as an issue in U.S. foreign policy began in the early 1970s, stemming from two causes. One was the campaign for free immigration from the Soviet Union. The other was the opposition to the war in Vietnam. For the former movement, human rights for Soviet citizens was an end in itself. For the latter, human rights was a means to an end, the ultimate goal being America's withdrawal from Vietnam. Exposing human rights violations on the part of our ally, the government of South Vietnam, was a way of convincing the public that our side was not just.

As the antiwar movement grew more radical in its critique of U.S. policy, it came to see Vietnam as but one instance of a broader pattern in which America and its local right-wing allies worked to repress indigenous liberation forces around the globe. Accordingly, the goals of these activists broadened beyond Vietnam.

The antiwar wing of the human rights movement formed a highly effective lobby called the Human Rights Working Group. Organized under the umbrella of some-

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thing called the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy, it was responsible for securing most human rights legislation (other than the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which linked trade with the Soviet Union to free emigration). This included laws placing human rights conditions on U.S. foreign aid, requiring annual reports from the State Department on the human rights records of other governments, and the like.

According to Bruce Cameron, who served as one of its two co-chairs, "the agreements made at the beginning [were] that the Human Rights Working Group would not touch . . . the Soviet bloc . . . because they were regarded as on the side of the 'good guys.'" This did not mean that the Soviet Union was an object of veneration, as it had been for Elizabeth Flynn. Instead, "the core group clearly thought of the world [as being] divided between the evil U.S., the questionable Soviet Union, and the good Third World People." When this group designed laws constraining U.S. aid to rightist regimes, it was not with the goal of pressuring them to reform; rather, it was to weaken the incumbents so they might more easily be overthrown. As Cameron explained, "The motive was that if you cut the link . . . then you create more space for the revolutionary Third World people to assert their right to self-determination."

To say that this motive was ulterior is not to say that these activists were insincere in their profession of commitment to human rights. Rather, they harbored an idiosyncratic picture of reality, perceiving an efflorescence of human rights in revolutionary regimes that appeared to others as the bleakest dictatorships. For example, Cameron's co-chair of the Human Rights Working Group, Jacqui Chagnon, went off after a few years to live in the Lao People's Democratic Republic as a field worker. The Laos regime, which always scored the lowest possible rank on Freedom House's survey of freedom, and which was widely regarded as a puppet of Vietnam's, stirred Chagnon's profound admiration.

"What I found," she told me in 1983 after her return, "is that most of the rich people, not all, didn't like the current government and most of the poor people did. But the majority are poor; therefore the majority do like the current government." As for the notorious Laotian reeducation camps that one might think would trouble a human rights activist, Chagnon was upbeat. "They simply just took the heavy-duty 'baddies' and put them in remote areas, essentially, and said, 'take care of yourselves,'" she explained. When I asked about the 300,000 Laotians, some 8 percent of the population, who had by then fled the country, most seeking asylum in the United States, Chagnon said that this was at bottom due to a misunderstanding: "They have this conception that we don't pay taxes. In some way the word 'freedom' and the word 'free' got mixed up. So therefore they were blaming their government for making them pay a tax that we could consider wonderful by our standards." The Lao nation, apparently, was rife with libertarians. Whichever of them had the misfortune to reach our shores would surely bolt for the first boat back as soon as they got wind of the IRS.

In short, the human rights movement had two wings, one whose focus was anti-Soviet and one whose focus was anti-American. Human Rights Watch, founded by Aryeh Neier and a couple of colleagues in 1978, amalgamated both. Initially, in fact, it was not a single organization but a constellation of several, organized by region: Helsinki Watch (for the Soviet bloc), Americas Watch, Asia Watch, etc. Later, they combined into a single body.

Helsinki Watch distinguished itself by fine work in support of Soviet and Eastern European dissidents. And some of the other regional groups did likewise. Asia Watch, for example, advocated powerfully on behalf of the Chinese democracy movement mowed down around Tiananmen Square. As with the ACLU, many of those involved in HRW, including even some with hard left pasts, came to value the human rights cause above ideology. But the leftist strain that turned the human rights cause upside down—exemplified in Jacqui Chagnon's dogged and inventive devotion to the Lao People's Democratic Republic—was ever present.

In the 1980s, it made itself felt most forcefully in the work of Americas Watch, led directly by Neier. While combating the very real crimes of rightist military regimes in Central America, Americas Watch also made evident its sympathy for the leftist guerrilla opposition, whose depredations were less lethal, if at all, only for lack of opportunity. This ideologically twisted use of the human rights issue came into especially bold relief in Nicaragua, where the usual roles were reversed.

The Communist Sandinistas had taken power, instituting a dictatorship, and were opposed by anti-Communist guerrillas. Suddenly, Americas Watch directed less of its critical scrutiny to the people in power than to the insurgents, whereas elsewhere it had justified ignoring the misdeeds of (leftist) guerrillas on the grounds that they did not constitute a government. While Americas Watch sometimes criticized the acts of Sandinistas, these criticisms were hedged with excuses and explanations—the abuses did not constitute a "pattern," or they were justified by "national security"—the very sorts of argument to which Americas Watch gave no credence when offered by rightist regimes.

In addition, Americas Watch issued numerous documents debunking charges against the Sandinistas by

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Nicaraguan defectors and other human rights organizations, both Nicaraguan and American. The Permanent Commission on Human Rights, a venerable Nicaraguan group that had defended the Sandinistas when they were repressed by the dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza and whose denunciations of the Sandinistas therefore carried special credibility, was, perhaps for that very reason, a notable target of Americas Watch. Another such was the U.S.-based International League for Human Rights.

All of this was a peculiar use of resources for a human rights organization. Americas Watch therefore explained in one of these broadsides why it was defending an abusive government. "Ordinarily, we do not take pains to state the abuses of which a government is not guilty," it said. "In the case of Nicaragua, we feel called upon to do so because the Reagan administration has engaged in a concerted effort to distort the facts, charging the Nicaraguan government with abuses far in excess of what it actually commits." Clearly, Americas Watch deemed it more important to combat Reagan than to combat human rights violations.

The end of Soviet expansionism also brought an end to the Sandinista regime, which, shorn of its superpower protector, was forced to hold free elections that turned it out of office. It also diminished the distortions in Human Rights Watch's work that had been caused by the ideological polarization of the Cold War.

But it did not eliminate them entirely. The leftist and anti-American impulses were still strong, even if robbed of a long familiar context. Ten days after the attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, Human Rights Watch issued a call to arms:

> In the coming weeks and months, we at Human Rights Watch will make every effort to monitor compliance with international humanitarian law by all parties to an armed conflict that now seems inevitable. We will have teams of researchers deployed throughout central and south Asia to investigate any failure in the duty to spare civilians and to insist that refugees from the fighting be properly protected. Where police are engaged in bringing suspects to justice, we will uphold international standards of law enforcement. And in countries where the fear of terrorist attack runs highest, we will be vigilant for harassment and discrimination against Muslims, people of Arab or Asian descent, and other people of color who may be unfairly targeted in this fraught political climate.

Clearly, the anticipated threat stemmed not from the terrorists but from the response by the United States and its allies. With war looming against al Qaeda, Human Rights Watch further admonished Americans that "like the office workers in the World Trade Center, the ordinary women and men of Afghanistan do not deserve to die." This suggested that to make war on al Qaeda, with its inevitable collateral casualties, would make America no less culpable than the terrorists. What, then, should the United States do about the attacks perpetrated against it? "Those responsible should be held accountable and brought to justice before a court of law," recommended HRW.

Spurning this advice, the American government declared a war against terrorism. Throughout the five years of this war, Human Rights Watch has focused on what it portrays as an endless parade of abuses by the United States and its allies.

In response to the criticisms leveled by NGO Monitor at Human Rights Watch's treatment of Israel, HRW produced its own count of the documents it issued regarding the Middle East and North Africa over a five and a half year period, starting in 2000. It shows that there were about as many documents on Iran as on Israel and marginally more on Egypt.

It also showed that the one Middle Eastern country that had received appreciably more attention from Human Rights Watch, the subject of twice as many reports as Israel, Iran, or Egypt, was Iraq. And who do you suppose was the main villain in Iraq? Saddam Hussein? Al Qaeda in Iraq, which planted bombs killing civilians day in, day out? Of course not. The villain was the United States. Human Rights Watch issued nearly three times as many documents focusing on the depredations of the United States as on Saddam and the Iraqi "resistance" combined. HRW's treatment of Iraq also cast further light on its treatment of Israel. The period covered by HRW's self-study included the last 39 months of Saddam's rule, during which time it had addressed 20 documents to the behavior of his regime. During the same period, HRW found cause to issue some 62 documents aimed at Israel. Saddam might have been an unfortunate ruler for Iraq, but it seems he was nowhere so bad as the prime ministers of Israel.

This was the period during which the second intifada began. It pitted a democratic state against an insurgency whose method consisted almost entirely of terrorism and whose ideology ran the gamut from authoritarian to totalitarian to nihilist. Why is it not shocking to report that Human Rights Watch, among others of its ilk, reserved most blame for the country that practices democracy and allies itself with America?

It is not shocking because we have grown all too familiar with the misuse of terms like "democratic," as in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and "human rights" by people who harbor disguised ideological agendas. When Human Rights Watch decided in the recent war in Lebanon to treat Israel, rather than Hezbollah, as the blameworthy side, it was not acting from any logic of human rights as most would understand that term. It was upholding a long, lamentable tradition. ♦

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This Land Is Whose Land?

In which Piscataway seizes the Halper family farm

By Matt Labash

Piscataway, N.J.

This past winter, when last we left Logan Darrow Clements in the snows of New Hampshire, he was engaged in a modest, civic-minded enterprise. He was trying to steal the house of Supreme Court justice David Souter. Normally not moved to vigilantism, the L.A.-based former Internet entrepreneur had been inspired by the Supreme Court's June 2005 decision in the case known as *Kelo* v. *New London*.

By a 5-4 vote, the high court had essentially allowed cities to invoke the power of eminent domain to seize private property not for roads or schools, as is common practice, but for less noble purposes, such as indulging Biff McFranchiser's discovery that your land is the ideal location from which to sell hamburgers. The cities, which would force you to sell at whatever "fair market" price they demanded on threat of condemnation, would get to keep the toy at the bottom of your Unhappy Meal, in the form of higher tax revenue. Biff, to the cities' thinking, would generate more income for their coffers than you would by, say, having Pictionary parties or sitting on your couch watching TV.

In place of Souter's lifelong homestead, Clements intended to erect the Lost Liberty Hotel, where defiant B&B'ers could celebrate the sanctity of private property while dining on Revenge Soup, served cold at the Just Deserts Café. Instead of Gideon Bibles, the rooms would offer *Atlas Shrugged*, since the objectivist Clements is a follower of Ayn Rand.

Though Clements's move was an impulsive act ("a late-night idea I threw up on the Internet"), he wasn't slashing Souter's tires or boiling his cats. Rather, he was doing something truly radical: attempting to make a judge live by his own ruling. As a publicity stunt, it was superior, a candy-coated middle finger with a chewy moral center. It gained Clements buckets of ink, including the cover of this magazine. That's considerably more attention than his brand of leave-us-alone libertarianism garnered when he finished 131st out of 135 candidates in the California gubernatorial recall election in 2003.

But despite his talent for generating headlines, Clements couldn't get across the finish line in Souter's hometown of Weare. The candidates for selectman he'd helped recruit went down in a March election, and a ballot initiative he'd co-masterminded was gutted by underhanded parliamentary maneuvering. The Live-Free-Or-Die types in Weare, it turned out, stymied Clements not because they agreed with the Supreme Court's ruling, but because they didn't, believing it wrong to seize private property even if it belonged to one of the justices who'd given others license to steal.

Clements, however, is not easily discouraged. He knows the war against eminent domain abuse will be a long one. Besides, he's making a documentary about it through his fledgling company, Freestar Media. He intends to become an "objectivist Michael Moore," or perhaps "John Stossel on steroids." So I found it impossible to resist his invitation in July to ride shotgun on his next endeavor. It was to go to Piscataway, New Jersey, to film the forcible removal of a family from their property.

It is an image that Clements believes is essential to capture, one that could conceivably turn the tide. It might awaken affluenza-bitten Americans, who are generally sympathetic to his cause, but who are forever balancing the right of private-property ownership against their own inalienable right to have easy access to overpriced pumpkin spice lattes. Sure, Clements and I would feel like a couple of vultures on a telephone wire. So probably did the guy who filmed blacks getting fire-hosed in the streets of Birmingham. Injustice needs its witnesses.

Plus, Clements was turning the eviction into some-

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thing of an event. He put out a call on the Internet for supporters to rally around the family being evicted, to camp on their property, to form a "human constitution" around their house, and to attend a free concert on their behalf. "It'll be like Woodstock without the mud, and Valley Forge without the frostbite," he told me. So I flew to Piscataway slightly ahead of Clements to get acquainted with the carrion.

Piscataway (an Indian term meaning "it is getting dark") was once a charming farm community. But like so much of America, it is now a charmless depot off the Turnpike, a 19-square-mile blur of box stores, strip malls, and high-density housing. In the middle of this, sprawled over 75 acres, sits the Halper farm, one of the last agricultural tracts in Piscataway.

The farm has been in the family since 1922 and until the city officially took ownership, in 2004, was co-owned by numerous Halper aunts and cousins, most of whom live elsewhere. Mark Halper still ran a mulch business on the land, and his cousin Gary oversaw a horse farm on another corner, making ends meet by giving pony rides to children. But Larry Halper (Mark's twin brother) and his wife Clara still worked and lived on the land, though they owned only a one-twelfth interest in the total family acreage. Even though everyone was getting bounced, it was their plight and property that attracted Clements.

The township has made feints at taking the Halper property for decades. In 1975, it actually did force the Halpers to sell 25 acres, which Piscataway added to an adjoining park. But the current festivities got underway in earnest in 1998. Around that time, the city purportedly grew nervous that some of its last privately owned green space might fall into the hands of ghastly developers, the kind that are regularly found in bed with the local politicians, making New Jersey a notorious "pay to play" state. Take a ride around the perimeter of the Halper farm, and such concerns don't seem to have plagued city planner consciences in the past, what with all the quaint mom 'n' pop operations like Wal-Mart, Starbucks, and Hollywood Tans that blanket the town like bad wall-to-wall carpeting.

From the look of things, plenty of people are making hefty profits selling Piscataway real estate off to the highest bidder. But to the city's thinking, the Halpers shouldn't be among them. They only worked the farm for nearly a century, why should they make money off it? Never mind that they'd received unsolicited offers for their land for decades and managed not to sell. Piscataway officials were coming after their property anyway, vowing to maintain it as "open space." An incredulous Clements asks what could be "more 'open space' than a farm?"

Considering that a farmer's land is his livelihood when he's working, and often his retirement fund when he's not, the Halpers didn't take the city's assaults lying down. But as more court battles unfolded than even the lawyers can keep track of, the family's choices boiled down to the following: (a) become tenant farmers under the state's Farmland Preservation Program, permitted to stay on their land but forced to sell the development rights to the government, (b) sell to the government now, even if it's offering a fraction of what developers would pay, (c) give up the property through condemnation and take whatever the township or courts give them, and (d) stay onboard the sinking ship and make lots of noise as it goes down. Larry and Clara Halper chose (d).

Over the years, the Halpers have claimed they've been subjected to all sorts of harassment, from Larry getting charged with animal cruelty for allegedly not providing veterinary care to two horses, to their daughter being cited for jaywalking in a Shop-Rite parking lot, to cops showing up on their property and beaming lights in their window. The Halpers fight back. Clara once filed a complaint against a town councilman who she said manhandled her when she was trying to videotape one of their meetings. She also ran for mayor as an independent to bring visibility to their plight, garnering a third of the votes of Democratic mayor Brian Wahler, who has helped lead the charge against them.

But petty tit-for-tat aside, the case smelled fishy from the beginning. New Jersey, it should be remembered, is a state so corrupt that over 200 of its officials have been indicted since 2002. The New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice has a public corruption hotline, and during a write-in contest for a new tourism slogan, one of the finalists was "New Jersey: Most of our elected officials have not been indicted."

In this climate, the plot thickened in the Halper case with the involvement of one David D'Amiano, a Democratic fundraiser and friend of then-governor Jim McGreevey. He is currently serving two years in prison after pleading guilty to two counts of mail fraud. The original 11-count indictment against him included bribery and extortion. The victim of his alleged extortion was the Halper family, until Larry's brother Mark wore a wire on behalf of the feds.

When the county initially offered the family a paltry $3 million to join the Farmland Preservation Program (private developers had offered close to $14 million for the land), D'Amiano—a middle man with no official connection or title—got involved, telling Mark that for direct cash payments to him and donations to the Democratic State Committee, he could help the Halpers preserve their farm, or at least get them a better deal.

This sordid business had all sorts of Runyonesque

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accents, such as D'Amiano telling Mark that he'd "really be f—ed" if he didn't pay up, perhaps by another co-conspirator burying him "20 miles beneath the Pacific Ocean." So far, that's the stuff of everyday real estate transactions in New Jersey. But the case got extra weird when D'Amiano arranged a meeting between Halper and then-governor McGreevey, in which McGreevey was supposed to drop the code word "Machiavelli" if in fact officials were working on the Halpers' behalf. McGreevey did mention the name in their conversation, later claiming it was just a "literary allusion."

McGreevey was never charged with wrongdoing, and the scandal was overshadowed by his announcement that he'd had an affair with a man other than his wife. Likewise, local officials were not charged, though some had had dealings with D'Amiano. The Republican party still made hay in the 2004 elections with signs posted all over town saying "Bribery, Corruption, Indictment. Had Enough???" Though Democrats swept the township's four open seats, their feelings were hurt, and they filed a libel suit against Republicans. The ACLU jumped into the fray—on the Republicans' side.

To this day, Piscataway officials express befuddlement that the Halpers never entered the Farmland Preservation Program, saying it proves they had no intention of farming the land, but rather wanted to sell it. But the Halpers were still expressing interest in joining the program as late as 2004, and say good-faith negotiations seemed to stall after the extortion attempt. These things tend to happen when someone who represents himself as negotiating on behalf of "the buyers" threatens to bury the sellers under the Pacific Ocean.

As I drive up onto the Halper property one day before Clements's "Eminent Domain Woodstock" and two days before they are supposed to be evicted by the township, what greets me is not exactly a Rebecca-of-Sunnybrook-Farm tableau. The Halpers don't intend to vacate—they plan on being forcibly removed, partly out of stubbornness and principle, partly to help Clements achieve his Rosa Parks moment. But they are trying to spirit away as many of their possessions as they can, from rusty discarded field implements to the collapsible walls of warehouses. Whatever is left behind will be no longer theirs, from their furniture to Larry's crops.

I walk up to the modest stone-and-siding farmhouse, where the only remaining animals, 15 or so Rhode Island Red chickens and a feral cat with her litter, are battling for supreme control of the porch. I shake Larry's dirt-caked hand, which he first wipes on a garage-sale shirt, and ask him how he's doing. He permits a pained smile. "Uhhh, I'm a little busy right now, I'm homeless," he says. I ask him who he holds responsible for this. "The American public," he says without emotion. "They watch the stupid blue light at night instead of taking care of their government. They leave it to these bums."

Photos by Matt Labash

Larry and Clara Halper before the eviction

Now heating up, he calls all the politicians and judges he's crossed swords with "scumbags." "At the same time that they're stealing my farm for 'open space,' they're developing five other farms or nurseries in town. . . . They're nothing more than whores. Their parents were whores. Their grandparents were whores. Their kids are probably going to be whores." Larry's not taking it well.

Clara stands by him, a capacious woman who wears a surf T-shirt and flip-flops. She laughs nervously and often, always mindful to ask if you want something to drink, even though her kitchen is such a wreck, what with the move, that she's lucky if she can find the refrigerator. Larry says the township was supposed to pay his moving expenses, but hasn't given him a nickel. They're parking their belongings on a neighbor's lot for the time being. He has nowhere to move to, since it's pretty hard to find the equivalent 75-acre farm just lying around. And even if he could find one, how would he buy it?

Larry and Clara have four children, ages 8 to 16. The youngest, Cassie, sits in their living room, littered with boxes and household debris. Her pink Minnie Mouse suitcase is already packed, as she sits at the computer, tapping out something titled "My Story" in rainbow lettering. In part, it reads:

> I am here to tell you about my miserable and sometimes happy life. This all started when I was born. What started,

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> you asked. Condemnation! Because of one person, named Brian Wahler. . . . The first year I was born, I couldn't go on any vacations because my parents were fighting a war waged against us. My house was always filled with papers and barely had anytime for fun. It was always work, work, work.

Zac, the Halpers' 16-year-old son, is working with his dad today, as he often does—up to five hours a day after school. But now, he's doing so in a blind fury, operating tractors and carrying the family piano out on a front-end loader. His toil kicks up and cakes him with so much grime that he looks like James Dean after the oil gusher blew in *Giant*. The Halpers, both Jewish, have sent their two middle daughters off to stay with a relative in Israel. It perhaps says something about the state of affairs here at home that they feel more secure with their daughters in range of Hezbollah's Katyusha rockets than in the line of fire in Piscataway.

The city condemned the Halper farm in 2004 and gave the family $4.3 million, of which Halper won't touch his share. "I don't want their money," he says. "I want my farm back." Split twelve ways after taxes, it doesn't go very far; plus, his family, he estimates, has run up close to a million dollars in legal fees over the years. At this moment, Larry and Clara alone have four sets of lawyers handling everything from compensation to environmental issues to conflict-of-interest appeals.

While the $4.3 million offer resulted from the city's own assessment of the property, the Halpers say their land is worth exponentially more, and more still considering that they don't want to sell. But assuming they did, a developable acre in Piscataway, they say, could hold as many as three houses, making a million per acre not out of the question. With 75 acres, do the math.

A jury has found the city's math skills lacking, and said the Halpers were due $18 million. A judge has ordered the local government to pay an additional $8 million, which is in escrow and untouchable by the Halpers, since Piscataway is still appealing. The township's attorney actually had the nerve to argue that recent real estate appreciation shouldn't be a factor since Piscataway's condemnation of the Halper farm has lessened its value.

Mayor Wahler has accused the Halpers of running not a farm, but a "solid waste transfer station," suggesting environmental problems might be found. But the local papers have scoffed at the notion. The *Bergen County Record* reports that health officials have found no evidence of illegal dumping, and when the Middlesex County Health Department issued a $1,500 fine relating to the mulch operation, the state Department of Environmental Protection rescinded it. The Halpers regularly use all kinds of vegetative waste products to help make Mark's mulch and Larry's organic topsoil.

Larry grows thousands of ornamental trees, but no longer farms many conventional crops like corn because he says he always figured he might not be around to harvest them. He says the township has destroyed his business, such as the pick-your-own-pumpkin patch he had going, by constantly crowing that the Halpers no longer own the farm. The condemnation has turned him into a literal dirt-farmer, providing topsoil to nurseries and such, when not supplementing his family's income by pulling odd jobs, like filling swimming pools from a huge water truck.

You can nearly feel the grab-your-ankles moment coming for the Halpers, when the city's public information officer, Anne Gordon, explains on the phone that, rest assured, the Halpers will be "fairly compensated" and "nobody's trying to cheat them out of any money at all." (Mayor Brian Wahler could not be reached for an interview.)

It's been the township's position that the reason for taking the Halpers' property was that the family was going to sell to developers. As proof, the township has publicized two unsolicited offers the Halpers received of up to $13.8 million almost ten years ago. So where's the "fair market value" in offering now to pay the Halpers less than one-third of that? Gordon says the developers were willing to pay that for land they could build on, which the township "probably never would have allowed," so the township's assessment was a "fair market value per acre at that time."

As soon as Gordon finishes assuring me the township has no intention of cheating the Halpers, she tells me exactly how the township will likely cheat the Halpers. "There's going to be a tremendous chemical clean-up of that property," she says, adding that any clean-up costs will "unfortunately come off the top of their money." Gordon's never been on the property, nor does she know of any "definitive test" that's been done that would bear out her charges, but she speculates wildly. "Oil drums may be buried there. I don't have any evidence of that, but there may be people who do."

Just as an exercise—God forbid we jump to conclusions—I ask her to give me a rough guesstimate of how pricey this could get for the Halpers. Gordon grows coy. Of the tests that have already been run, she says, "I don't know what they show," therefore "I don't want to estimate, but somebody—and I don't know if it's accurate at all—said it could be $3 million. There's a feeling that there's been so much property damage on there we don't know about. Listen, I hope there's not."

As Clements says, "It's like if I steal a used car from you, then charge you for the repairs on the car. It's ridicu-

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lous." Keep in mind that the township condemned the Halper property not because of "blight"—a common reason offered for seizing property by eminent domain—but to preserve "open space," that is, make a park.

In other words, without officially claiming anything is wrong with the property, the city is helping itself to the product of three generations of Halper family labor—sub-freezing middle-of-the-night cow milkings when it was a dairy farm, year after vacationless year for Larry and Clara. The city vows that it's not selling their land off to developers, though literally every person I speak to in Piscataway doubts this, including those who don't support the Halpers. But so what if Piscataway doesn't resell the land? That means they're taking the Halper farm purely for aesthetic reasons—because it might look sorta pretty. Either way, they're taking it.

Clara and Cassie Halper

At the Halper farm that night, Clements catches up with us, fretting all the while about concert logistics, from finding generators to making sure Trucker Mike has made the trip from Texas since his flatbed is serving as the stage. After a half-hearted stab at helping the Halpers pack, we adjourn, along with Clements's producer/cameraman Rick Dowlearn, to a nearby restaurant for a late dinner. Larry passes. When I ask if we can get him anything, he says, "Yeah, a new farm."

At dinner, I mention to Clements that for Woodstock weekend, there don't seem be any campers present. Is that a bad sign? "I'm keeping my expectations low," he says. I ask him how many RSVPs there've been. "Not many," he says. "Like a hundred?" I ask. "Six," he says. I tell him I admire his honesty. "That's part of objectivism," he says.

It's not that he didn't try. Clements always tries hard. Sometimes, it feels like he's screaming into the void, trying to get people to care about eminent domain abuse after the *Kelo* decision, which he calls "a tragedy, the worst thing since *Dred Scott*. I need to inspire people to fight back against oppressive government. People regain their freedom when they lose their fear. But people are chicken."

For this event, he had a spreadsheet of constituencies to hit up for support. He skipped the Libertarians. "They suck, they never show up." He tried to interest RV owners, who told him "not enough notice." Then he targeted the Civil War reenactors. "They said not enough notice. . . . Bunch of fairies. They're more interested in playing dress-up." He even called a flash mob. "They said not enough notice. You're a flash mob! C'mon! I hate that. I mean, granted, I am a last-minute planner. I thought about calling the Hell's Angels, then I thought better of it."

No matter, says Clements, feigning optimism. He's hired two bands, a classic rock cover band named Glass Sun and Hello Nurse, who'll bring the modern sounds that the kids like. "All told, what do you think we'll have, about ten of us?" I ask. "Probably," says Clements. "Don't forget the band's girlfriends," Dowlearn reminds. Says Clements, "If there's nobody there but us and the ponies, they're still playing."

The next day, we fill a tiny portion of a former horse pasture, all 30 of us, including the band's girlfriends. Clara points out other fields in the distance, which she says were once adorned with beautiful mums and pumpkins. Schools used to brings kids there on field trips, and in off-seasons, the locals might lease a field to have religious tent-meetings. Now, the farmland mostly looks like weed-strewn moguls on a dirt-bike track. Clements has gone the extra mile, buying Dansk butter cookies and sourdough pretzels for concertgoers, as well as folding lawn chairs. Across the way, townspeople are buying their kids pony rides at Larry's cousin's stable for the last time. Tomorrow, it closes for good.

The concert is a low-energy affair. Glass Sun, who can cover everything from the Beatles' "I Am the Walrus" to Jethro Tull's "Locomotive Breath," believe in the need to stop eminent domain abuse almost as much as they believe in the 15-minute guitar solo. "Talk amongst yourselves over how you're gonna save the country," the lead singer says in between songs. Many of the rest of the audience are fellow eminent domain victims from around New Jersey, a place notorious for takings.

The Castle Coalition watchdog group has documented the most absurd eminent domain cases in the Garden

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State. In Carteret, the city wants to take the home of a World War II veteran dying of lung cancer, to give it to a luxury condominium developer. In New Brunswick, the city is trying to run off a local college bookstore owner who has owned his place for 33 years so that its redevelopment agency can build, among other things, another bookstore. In Union Township, a man who recently bought land to build townhouses on is being threatened by eminent domain so the township can turn the land over to another private developer who'll do exactly the same thing.

One who has come to watch the concert is Rev. Kevin Brown, who says his storefront ministry in Long Branch is being threatened by eminent domain. He calls himself a "butler in the house of God," who ministers to "everyone who suffers from eminent domain." He hauls a Bible around, tossing out anti-eminent domain scriptures ("Thou shalt not covet they neighbor's house"). After *Kelo*, he says, it's like "they let the lions on the Christians." Being an Em-Do minister, it turns out, is a good racket. "My congregation is always growing," he says.

Clements tries to keep the mood light. He apologizes to members of Hello Nurse for the paltry numbers, saying some day, during their "Behind the Music" special, they'll look back and laugh. His cohort Dowlearn, a part-time musician himself, says it's not that bad a gig. "We once played a hemp show at a nudist colony. They asked us to keep our clothes on."

After Dowlearn shoots some B-roll of Clements riding a horse at the stable, Clements can't help but show his disappointment. "Was it Woody Allen who said, 'Most of life is showing up'? That's the hardest thing—getting people to show up. I shouldn't have planned a rally. I'm starting to lose interest. I'm disappointed that people talk about how mad they are, but then don't get their corpus in front of a home that's being taken." He takes a last look at Em-Do Woodstock, shaking his head. "I should've invited motorcycle gangs."

The next day is eviction day, though that's come and gone before thanks to last-minute maneuvering by the Halpers' attorneys. Clements believes that however well meaning the lawyers, they're just delaying the inevitable, and this is his third expensive trip from California to Piscataway trying to catch the magic on film.

The last time Clements came here in vain, he made the trip worth his while by confronting Mayor Brian Wahler at a street fair with a camera and a Vladimir Lenin impersonator. Clements and Lenin tried to present Wahler with the "People's Award for Expropriation and Confiscation." The award was an old cheerleading trophy, the cheerleader's megaphone replaced with a hammer and sickle. Wahler wasn't in the mood to accept, telling them, "I'm going to give you exactly two minutes to get out of here."

When Wahler put a hand on him, Clements snapped, "Don't put your arm around me. You're not my friend. You're an enemy of property rights, you're an enemy of the Constitution, and you're a little dictator. And you're taking the Halpers' land. So we're going to be here all day. Lenin, you like cotton candy don't you?" Lenin never got his cotton candy. The Piscataway dictator's police force soon chased them off.

Outside and inside the Halpers' house, protesters gather, while TV trucks park in their driveway. Clements slips into his "spy shirt," a black Kenneth Cole number with a button ripped off so he can insert a hidden micro camera. It's good for catching cop-talk when they don't want you to film. As the eviction deadline of 3 P.M. draws nigh, there's little excitement to capture. There seems to be a much higher than usual police presence off the Halpers' property. One of them actually tickets Clements's car for parking too close to a stop sign.

But the only semi-official visit comes when two gentlemen in reflector shades and police-academy-issue mustaches drive down one of the Halpers' farm roads in an unmarked vehicle. When Clements runs at their car, asking them what they want, they ask for directions to a street they're already headed toward, which lies only 100 yards away. They're clearly on a scouting trip.

Three o'clock comes and goes, as do four and five. It becomes clear that the police aren't going to move on the Halpers while they have so much company. As the night wears on, the crowd disperses, and all who are left are the family, the Clements crew, and me. Clara has been whisked off to Manhattan by a Fox producer to do a live segment with Sean Hannity, the only other national journalist who's screaming bloody murder about the case.

We decide to spend the night on the living room floor, figuring it's likely that the police will pay a visit after dark, when they think no outsiders are there. Clements and I go to Wal-Mart to buy air mattresses and ten latch-locks, which he reasons will give us fair warning when the stormtroopers come, plus, it'll make a better visual. We also stop by the liquor store, to fashion a poor-man's wet bar in Larry's living room.

Back at the house, Clements wants to lift Larry and Zac's spirits, billing this an "Eminent Domain all-night party," as if we're at the MTV beach house. But with Clara and the girls gone, it's a total sausage fest. Clements sets about clumsily hammering his new locks into the door frame, since Larry's drill and screwdrivers are packed away. Cosmetic damage no longer matters. Larry doesn't drink or even make much conversation. It's days since he's had a decent night's sleep. He simply sits on the

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couch bleary-eyed. After half-heartedly eating a few sour cream'n'onion Pringles (the only meal he's had all day), he falls asleep despite all the hammering noise, after blankly watching the empty space where his television used to be.

Larry's son Zac, equally sleep-deprived, is a little more social. He explains his father's exhaustion. "We always work like it's the last day, since we don't know when the last day is." He's decided to fight alongside his parents, but isn't sure how much longer he wants the fight to go on. "I want to go on vacation," he says, sounding just for a moment like the 16-year-old he is. Then hardening up again, he says, "But I don't want to leave like this. I'd like to get paid."

The Eminent Domain Woodstock: less mud, smaller audience

That night, we all sleep fitfully, stirring at every noise. The house is hot, and there are so many flies buzzing about our faces from the door being open during all the moving that it feels like we're in a Sally Struthers infomercial. The morning comes, and the cops haven't. With our guard now down, I drive a few miles away to pick up some provisions, plus a football to toss around the yard in case we're stuck here for awhile. Before I complete my mission, I get a call from Clements. "Get back," he says, "They're here."

Two cops have come, again in an umarked car, and knock on the door, but Clements and the Halpers won't answer. As I pull in, the unmarked car is pulling out. I stop them, and ask them what's going on. An officer in civilian clothes on the passenger side asks, "What's your name?" "What's your name?" I respond. It goes on like that for awhile. "I'm asking you," he says. "I'm asking you," I reply. He says he's from the Piscataway police and starts photographing me. I tell them I'm a journalist and just want to know what's going on. The driver says, "There's a house right over there," which he points at. Then he pulls away. If they came to take the house, they don't seem very proud of it.

When I go inside, Clements is bucking up the Halpers. He tells them when it all comes down, which it probably will shortly, they should sit on the couch and do the "jellyfish"—don't resist arrest, just make your body limp, and don't make it easier for them. He wants to film them getting carried out. Clements tells me privately that he thinks the Halpers are fighters, but he still worries a bit that during crunch time, "they'll pull a Fanaro." He's referring to John Fanaro, another eminent domain victim Clements pulled a stakeout with in nearby South Bound Brook. Fanaro lost his nerve at the last minute and walked out.

Larry, however, is a ferocious scrapper, and has vowed not to leave—"unless Clara's staying," he jokes. "They're taking my farm for a park," he says. "And now they're trying to throw me off a public park. They take your home, they take your livelihood, what else can they take? Your life?" It's a rhetorical question, but he answers it anyway. "I'm sure they'd like to, so they wouldn't have to write the check out to me."

The hours tick by, and there's no additional action. Finally word comes from the lawyers that there's been yet another last minute delay, with a hearing on the eviction scheduled three days from now. The Halpers don't look particularly happy, since they still know the inevitable outcome. Clements throws up his hands in frustration. He and Dowlearn need to get back to California, so they hastily ship out. I have a long-scheduled beach vacation, and am not far behind.

As I leave, Larry is outside wrestling with farm equipment. Zac has shredded a tire on a truck with a front-loader bucket prong, and Larry doesn't have a replacement. Meanwhile, the support skids have broken on the trailer he uses to transport his gargantuan topsoil screener—his bread'n'butter machine. He's also lost a badly needed $1,000 swimming pool job while dealing with all this mess. As his cellphone rings, his frustration has turned to delirium. He laughs maniacally to a friend on the end of the line, saying, "F— this country, we're moving to Cuba." His life has turned into a bad movie: direction by Clements, screenplay by Sisyphus.

As I say my goodbyes to Clara in her empty living room, she wishes me well. But she warns, "They're getting rid of you guys, the press. And then they'll do something when nobody's looking. That's how they operate. They intimidate people." I tell her she's probably right, but we can't all camp out indefinitely. I ask her what she'll do next. "I really need a nap," she says.

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Last days on the farm

The following week, I'm at the beach, in phone contact with the players. After a hearing that went nowhere, the eviction is on again, and Clements hauls it back to Piscataway for his fourth trip and what he hopes is the final showdown. Again, the police don't come. The Halpers stay past the deadline, and the judge, angry at their insubordination, decides to fine them retroactively $4,000 for every day they've stayed on the farm. Having racked up a $16,000 tab, they decide to check into the Hampton Inn.

Once they're gone, the police come in the dark of night to take possession of the property. I get a despondent call the next morning from Clements. "I feel like Charlie Brown, where somebody keeps pulling the football away," he says. "Nobody was there to get the shot." Now all he has, regarding the Halpers, he says, is "lots of B-roll and pictures of their boarded-up house."

Weeks later, I talk to Clara by phone. Her daughters, she tells me, are back from Israel, though the whole family is now living like transients, crashing on friends' and family's couches and in their guest bedrooms. Often, they're not under the same roof. Not only did they lose their house, but Larry still had most of his topsoil on the property—the equivalent of leaving money on the ground. Larry estimates there's about 30,000 cubic yards of it, which he says retails for about $30 a cubic yard. Now, it belongs to the government of Piscataway.

Anne Gordon, the township's public information officer, tells me, "They could've taken the topsoil. He had a year. He could've had new land. These delays were caused by him going to the courts." She says it's the Halpers' own fault for not working with the relocation specialists. But the Halpers say that's bunk, since the township's relocation specialists simply sent them a list of small residences and apartments. "I don't have an apartment," says Larry. "I have a farm." It's pretty difficult to fit 30,000 yards of topsoil into an apartment.

Clara is nervous for their future. They've scouted property as far away as Arizona, but haven't found anything. Since they don't have a place, she's not even sure where the kids will be going to school, and its Zac's senior year. She has no hope of getting their ornamental trees back from the township. "They bulldozed the pin oaks and maples," she says.

She misses many things about their place, from their great room to "being outdoors, the fields, that oneness with nature. I miss the quiet, the peace, it was wonderful. It was our sanctuary." Still, they'd like to move on, but the township "won't let us, they won't pay us and cut the umbilical cord and let us move on. This is more than a taking, it's a vengeance. It's more like a rape. And it's repeated, over and over."

As for Clements, he bears no ill will toward the Halpers for compromising his money shot. "They're fighters. They're heroes," he says. "The judge left them no choice." He's going to get his shot, he promises. He's currently scouting more "user-friendly evictees." And he's not just playing defense, either, but plans to launch a major new offensive.

If David Souter thought his house was safe, he'd better think again. Clements says he has found a loophole in New Hampshire statute XXXIX, chapter 423, that allows a town to seize land outside its borders for an airport, meaning that he can work around Souter's hometown of Weare. Plans for the Lost Liberty Hotel have been transformed into plans for the Lost Liberty Airport (motto: Live Free or Fly). Clements says he has already lined up sympathetic selectmen in another town, which he is keeping under wraps until everybody's ready to move. He allows that he might've acted too impulsively the first time around. "Last time I just said I'm going to do this in Weare without asking anyone in Weare if they wanted to get on board."

Clements knows nothing about airports, but has already found the perfect person to operate one: Thor Solberg, whose own private airport in Readington, N.J., which was built by his father, is being threatened by eminent domain. Solberg's airport is home to one of the largest hot-air balloon festivals on the East Coast. Clements points out that Supreme Court justice Stephen Breyer, who, like Souter, voted the wrong way on *Kelo*, lives in New Hampshire, too.

"We hope that's how the movie will end," says Clements, ever the optimist. "With victims of eminent domain abuse taking off in a balloon from the Lost Liberty Airport, with connecting service between Souter's and Breyer's land." He knows it sounds like a pipe dream, so he ladles out a dose of realism: "That's assuming the wind permits." ♦

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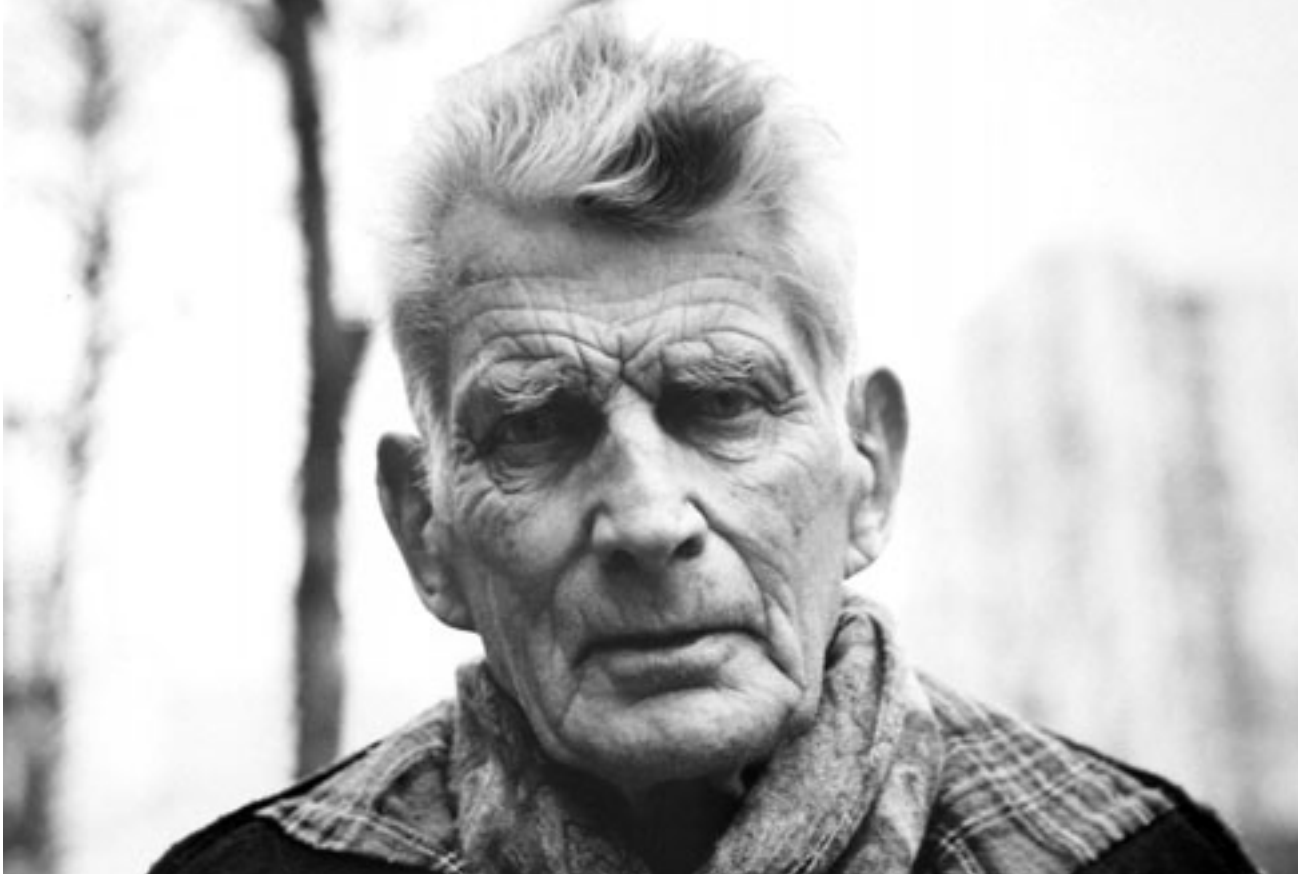

AFP / Getty Images / Fran Caffrey

Contradictory Beckett

Voluble and silent, funny and grim

BY JOHN SIMON

In this Samuel Beckett centenary year, a slew of books by or about him have come out, including a four-volume collected works. But it needs no centenary for Beckett items to pop up. Posthumous tomes—by or about Beckett, new or reprinted—proliferate.

Beckett Remembering/Remembering Beckett: A Centenary Celebration (hereafter *BRRB*) is one charming volume. The title minimizes punctuation, with BECKETT always in block capitals. And a capital book it is, edited by the spouses James and Elizabeth Knowlson, James being also the author of *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* which, supplemented by *BRRB*, strikes me as the definitive biography.

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) made vivid impressions on whomever he came in contact with: Remembrances, letters, significant pictures, and objects keep materializing.

Playwright and fictionist, but also poet and (unsuccessful) critic, Beckett survives also as a magnificent eccentric to whose name anecdotes cling in inexhaustible array.

Beckett Remembering/ Remembering Beckett
A Centenary Celebration
by James Knowlson
and Elizabeth Knowlson
Arcade, 336 pp., $27.95

For someone who, in his work and often in his life, was an advocate for and seeker after extinction—whose artistic career was a voyage toward diminishment of every kind and, ultimately, silence, disappearance, death—he nevertheless managed to turn lopping and dropping off into a grimly droll, grotesquely diverting, *oeuvre* and existence.

Happily for us, he was an uncannily acute hearer and observer, whether of the outside world or the one inside him. And the smaller the world of his fictional or dramatic characters became, the more they—or, rather, he—could squeeze out of that smallness. Godlike, he was in the details.

BRRB is partly the man reminiscing about his childhood and younger years, partly others, from famous to obscure, reminiscing about him. The sources are letters, conversations, articles, interviews, with not a few pieces solicited especially for this book. There are also a goodly number of pictures of Beckett and people and places in the book, and of productions of the plays, often as directed by himself. Productions in French and English, the languages he wrote in, but also

John Simon writes about theater for Bloomberg News.

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from Germany, where, too, he directed. The book's effectiveness is increased by copious head- and footnotes by the authors, but never endnotes, thus obviating the tiresome labor of flipping back and forward, and making *BRRB* not only readable and informative, but also eminently user-friendly.

We learn a good deal about Beckett's bourgeois Anglo-Protestant boyhood in Catholic Ireland, about his alternating Sundays of long walks with Dad and churchgoing with Mom. "The Bible," Sam has said, "was an important influence on my work. I've always felt it's a wonderful transcript, inaccurate but wonderful." He liked his easy-going businessman father, and feared and loved his strict, dog-loving mother. He and his brother Frank, with a scientific bent very different from Sam's, were similar in their shyness about girls, never even talking to the ones with whom they played tennis.

Sam was naturally athletic, excelling at sports and games, but equally interested in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. He could sing their arias almost letter-perfectly while accompanying himself on the piano.

Schoolmates recall Sam's keen sense of humor, his charming smile, his sometimes bizarre behavior. Not very sociable, he tended to keep to himself. This was so also later, at Trinity College, which he sometimes represented in sports. His field was Romance Languages and Literatures; after graduating, he worked on Jules Romains and unanimism, and the poet Pierre-Jean Jouve.

He also taught at Trinity, but, afraid of his students, he was not a good teacher. Some found him brilliant; others, an exhausted aesthete despising them. They wished he would explain his explanations. A typical sample: "Rimbaud harpooned his similes, but Verlaine netted them." Often he escaped abroad. He spent much time in Kassel, Germany, home of his first cousin, Peggy, with whom he conducted a two-year affair.

He spent more and more time in Paris, where he also studied, and, meeting James Joyce, became his part-time secretary. Poor and abstemious, he could make a dinner of two ounces of cheese bought at a little *charcuterie.* A more permanent stop, too, was London, where he went for psychoanalysis, outlawed in Ireland. He had a couple of years of it while also peddling his novel, *Murphy.* He failed at being a critic, and kept getting rejections from publishers. When Rutledge finally brought out the novel, it did poorly.

Settling in Paris and finding himself no good at anything else, he took up writing seriously. He was influenced by Joyce, but mostly *ab contrario*: Joyce was a maximalist, always adding; Beckett, a minimalist, always bent on subtraction. During the war years, he and his wife, Suzanne, retired to a small village in Roussillon, where he worked on his novel, *Watt.* Both were active in the Resistance. Later, Sam was to get sundry medals from the French government, but never mentioned them to anybody.

An American woman observed that Beckett never forgave anyone who had done him a favor. Nathalie Sarraute applied to him Proust's line: "A very ordinary man may inhabit a genius." Patrick Bowles, who worked with Beckett on the English translation of the novel *Molloy*, written in French, observed: "He talked of his books as if they were written by someone else."

"There are many things I don't understand in my books," Beckett said. "They are positive statements of negative things."

Beckett was very conflicted about which language to write in. In English, he could take things "more slowly, without missing so many details. And yet in French, without all the old associations . . . the outlines were clearer." (Make of this what you can.) He was a man self-effacingly attired in sober, conventional gray from top to toe. Yet he proclaimed, "It is the *extreme* that's important. Only at the *extreme* can you get to grips with the real problem."

Jean Martin, the Lucky of *Waiting for Godot*'s world premiere, and Roger Blin, who directed it and played Pozzo, complained of the slow pace Beckett was imposing on his plays. But he learned over the years. And especially after he himself directed *Godot* in Berlin, he came to realize the need for faster, livelier rhythms. In London, there were boos and catcalls for *Godot*, and the daily reviews were poor. But once the weeklies brought Harold Hobson's and Kenneth Tynan's appreciations, everything changed.

It was *Godot* (1953) that established Beckett's international reputation; it also epitomized the duality that courses through the work and the man. Vladimir (Didi) is the thinker, Estragon (Gogo) the man of feeling; both are inside Beckett, separate yet fused forever. Contrariness, too, was always present in him. He couldn't understand why the audience laughed at the funny parts in his drama, while he himself found humor in sad and dreadful situations at which no spectator would laugh. He claimed to regret deeply naming the vainly awaited character Godot, whom everyone interprets as God, with whom he has nothing to do. But why, then, so name him?

Or take this, which may or may not appear somewhere in print, but which someone who knew Beckett told me. Sam would invite him and others to the Crazy Horse Saloon, Paris's premier burlesque house, with the best-looking nude showgirls. The audience sat at tables, and Beckett, hugely enjoying himself, always chose to sit with his back to the show.

As Beckett told a sympathetic academic, he aspired to what he recognized is the impossible task of eliminating form—not just breaking it down or working against it, but eliminating it. His idea was "to let in chaos and what is not ordered." He also called for a syntax of poverty and for drama without action, only words.

There is a contradiction between systematic paring down and inviting chaos in. This is Beckett's passive-aggressive attitude toward art as well as life: On the one hand, calmly endure things washing over him; on the other, extirpate and eliminate more and more. Like Walt Whitman, he was happy to contradict himself.

Aidan Higgins relates that John Beckett warned him it was no use writing to his cousin Sam, who never

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replied. But Beckett did reply, only it was no use: The handwriting was illegible. In later life, Beckett remarked that he, too, sometimes couldn't decipher things he had written a year or two before. A complicated fellow. Martin Esslin, then head of drama at the BBC, got a superb cast together for a Beckett tape on which they espoused his speech rhythms. Sam objected: "Too sentimental." As Esslin notes, "His own voice was extremely sentimental ["a wonderfully musical Irish voice with the slight lisp," the actor Alan Mandell called it], he shuddered from it, from his own voice." And this despite two years of psychoanalysis.

When the actress Brenda Bruce, playing Winnie in London's *Happy Days*, asked him about a line in it, Beckett answered, "'Tis of no consequence." Countless others over the years who put similar questions to him came away with like answers. When she told him that someone walked out on the show, he said, "Great, that's good." Was it modesty, playfulness, self-depreciation? Or was it the desire not just to reach people, but rather to get under their skin?

Beckett's relations with women were peculiar. The set designer Jocelyn Herbert, a close friend, commented savvily on Sam's marriage. He had met the pianist Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil in 1937 and became involved with her. But he did not marry her till 1961, then stayed married until her death in 1989.

"A lot of it," Herbert said, "was gratitude and loyalty. I think he felt remorse for . . . so many friends he got drunk with. She didn't drink. And he had after all endless other women."

What about them? The title of an early Beckett novel, *A Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, reveals much. Sam's beloved mother had a cigar-store-Indian face. Suzanne was no less homely; "a stumpy little woman," Esslin called her. Cousin Peggy in Kassel could at least pass for fair to middling. In Paris, Peggy Guggenheim was decidedly plain. Of the lovers I know about, only the Joyces' daughter Lucia was good-looking; is it significant that she was to go mad? Looks, evidently, did not matter much. The German actress who starred in Berlin's *Happy Days* recalled, "All women, including myself . . . had the feeling that they had to shelter him, to embrace him . . . as a human being, not necessarily as a man." But how many steps from one kind of embrace to the other?

To his frequent leading lady, Billie Whitelaw, then in a London revival of *Happy Days*, he complained that he "only recently realized how much [he] disliked it: particularly the first act." But actors adored acting for him, however exacting a director he was. Thus Horst Bollmann, the Berlin Estragon: "I consider that my encounter with Beckett is reward enough in itself for having been an actor all my life." So many performers noted that within the rigors imposed by Beckett's directing, they could most truly express themselves. This was especially true in the numerous productions performed in prisons by the inmates, who found the various confinements of Beckett's characters particularly applicable to themselves.

Beckett strongly disagreed with Wittgenstein's assertion that, about what cannot be said, one must remain silent: "That is the whole point. We must speak about it." Yet such hard, desperate pursuit in the work did not preclude pleasures in life, where hedonism mingled with asceticism. Beckett enjoyed his whisky and brandy to the extent of forcing them on his guests. Forbidden drink while he was getting vitamin injections, he exclaimed, "It is a bugger of a bastard of a bitch. . . . I'll make up for it later."

But you could not pay for a drink in his company; his generosity was legendary. He distributed his Nobel Prize money among his penurious friends. To Roger Blin, along with the hefty check, he wrote, "Neither thanks nor 'no.'" And always welcome, too, was his enduring wit. Told that "you pack a lot into a two-page text," he shot back, "I also pack a lot out." When his friend, the writer Raymond Federman, solicited him for a prestigious interview in *The Paris Review*, back came a one-line answer: "Dear Raymond, Sorry, I have no views to inter."

James Knowlson's account of Beckett's last phase, eventually in an old folks' home, is enormously moving. Sam was still writing, though he found it "very painful, very difficult. . . . It gets harder and harder to write a line that's honest." As the writer and filmmaker Anthony Minghella put it, "I think the healing [laughter] gradually disappeared from his writing. [But] no matter how miserable or dark or cruel it appears, his work is also profoundly uplifting. It's honest, naked, leavened with mischief. And full of pity."

Beckett admired Proust (though his book about Proust's work is impenetrable), Sean O'Casey, Goethe, and Yeats, and could quote, always in context, Yeats, Joyce, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Nicolas Chamfort, even the now almost forgotten Jose Maria de Heredia. He would recite a whole Mallarmé sonnet on a walk with friends. Rightly, he preferred Camus to Sartre.

"What remains is music," he said. The list of the composers he liked is impressive, stretching from Haydn to Webern, but excluding Bach and all of Wagner save *Tristan*. Strauss's *Four Last Songs*, Berg, and Bartok also made the cut. Fine arts similarly mattered. In Berlin, Ruby Cohn reports, he knew what was in every gallery. He sent her to see Caspar David Friedrich's *Two Men Observing the Moon*, which he, perhaps whimsically, claimed was the inspiration for writing *Godot*. He liked Kokoschka's early work very much, the later stuff less. He could recall exactly a Poussin in Ireland's National Gallery. And to the very end, he was interested in what was going on in the world.

As I reflect on his career, I note that, early in life, Beckett told a friend, "I'm not interested in the normal. I'm only interested in the abnormal." Though *Beckett Remembering/Remembering Beckett* doesn't mention it, the last thing he wrote was a poem called "Comment dire," which he translated as "What Is the Word." Perfect bookends.

In an abnormal world such as ours, abnormality commands attention. But for the writer, the first and last problem is to find the right words. Beckett, as nearly as anyone, found them. ♦

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March of Horrors

Truth is the first weapon against genocide.

BY DEBORAH E. LIPSTADT

EPA / Corbis / Fehim Demir

Burial of Bosnian Muslims killed in Srebrenica, 2006

Ethnic cleansing has changed the face of Europe. In 1913 Salonika was a multicultural city with more Jews and Muslims than Greek Orthodox Christians. By the middle of the 20th century it was a Greek city with virtually no Jews or Muslims. Until the beginning of the 20th century, Macedonia had been home to both Bulgarians and Greeks. In 1916 Greeks fled. At the beginning of the 20th century the western sectors of the Russian empire were heavily populated by Jews, who had lived there for centuries. Within a few decades virtually no Jews lived in these areas, or in many other parts of Europe.

Terrible Fate
Ethnic Cleansing in the Making of Modern Europe
by Benjamin Lieberman
Ivan R. Dee, 416 pp., $27.50

The Polish port city of Gdansk was once a German city. Little, if any, of the German presence is felt there today. Izmir used to be home to a substantial Greek population. It no longer is. In eastern Turkey there are scores of towns and villages once populated by millions of Armenians. The Turks expelled them in acts of unprecedented intensity. In what was the Austro-Hungarian Empire an exceptionally diverse mix of peoples once lived. Little of that diversity is still evident.

These changes were the result not of natural population movements but of brutal actions, now termed ethnic cleansing. This is the subject of Benjamin Lieberman's compelling book.

What motivates neighbor to brutally turn on neighbor? It may be conflicting languages, religions, or national identities. Some attackers consider it a chance for personal gain: Never underestimate the lure of looting, or deriving perverse pleasure from driving neighbors from their homes. There is yet another factor: history, or more properly put, the rendition of history to which one portion of the population has been exposed. While these stories of betrayal and injustice may be true, others are greatly exaggerated or false.

As Lieberman demonstrates, ethnic cleansing feeds upon itself. As the century progressed it became an increasingly familiar response to political situations. People knew it, and considered it a legitimate means of solving their perceived problems.

While the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust are probably the best known of the century's atrocities, neither is a template for ethnic cleansing, which has generally been used by weak governments to deflect attention from genuine problems. In contrast, the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, and, for that matter, Stalin's treatment of a host of minorities, were conducted by authoritarian regimes at the *height* of their power.

The Holocaust is certainly not a template because, generally, ethnic cleansing's objective is the removal of a segment of the population through deportations, population transfers, and forced migration. The perpetrators know that the result of these actions could be death, even on a massive scale. However, their objective is not murder. In contrast, Nazi Germany chased down every Jew it could find in order to murder them. They did so even when the men and materiel used for the killing could have been better deployed elsewhere.

The new Jewish Museum in Rome contains a letter written on a crumpled piece of paper by a Jew as he was being deported from the Italian capital. It is dated May 20, 1944. Rome was liberated on June 4th. As the Allied forces were on Rome's doorstep, the Germans, rather than throw all available resources to repelling the enemy, were deporting Jews to Auschwitz. The letter writer never returned.

Deborah E. Lipstadt, professor of Holocaust Studies at Emory, is the author, most recently, of History on Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving.

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How might ethnic cleansing be repaired and prevented in the future? Unless refugees are returned in short order to their homes, the chances for resettlement are very poor. If they do return, there must be local reconciliation projects, economic development, legal proceedings, and effective guarantees of security. Those who have committed these acts must be apprehended and tried in the appropriate legal setting.

Lieberman believes that historians from both sides of the conflict must work together to create an accurate historical record. It may well be research by historians—Turkish historians in particular—that will compel Turkey to end its genocide denial. As Turkish historians explore what their country did, it will become increasingly difficult for the government to continue to hide behind historical fictions. But it is not sufficient, Lieberman notes, for the historians to conduct research. The broader public will have to accept its findings. Once that happens, the policymakers will have no choice but to follow in their wake.

Germany's postwar entry into the "family of nations" was hastened by its strategic geographic importance in the Cold War. However, that reentry would not have been as swift or complete had Germany not openly acknowledged and made amends for the unspeakable horrors committed by both the Nazi leaders and millions of Germans during World War II. Its willingness to face its past was certainly not complete. Perpetrators were given light sentences or never prosecuted. Slave laborers found it difficult to receive compensation. Nazi-era judges continued in their posts. Medical doctors who participated in gassing experiments went on to distinguished careers in Germany.

These failings notwithstanding, Germany did not shrink from acknowledging the deeds it had committed and making some restitution for them. This certainly facilitated the healing process.

This is a painful book to read. Many people will recoil from the repeated tales of looting, physical persecution, and death. That would be a mistake. The only hope for an end to this terrible march of horrors is for people—particularly Europeans—to understand and acknowledge it. As Lieberman notes in his conclusion, "arriving at a new understanding of history" will not resolve all problems, but it will increase the chances that different groups will be able to live in peace together. ♦

Thorny Questioner

The hard life, and uncomfortable work, of Baruch Spinoza. **BY KATHRYN DEVITO**

"Can the seventeenth-century rationalist, who produced one of the most ambitious philosophical systems in the history of Western philosophy, be considered, by any stretch of interpretation, a Jewish thinker?" asks Rebecca Goldstein. "Can he even be considered a Jew?"

It is these questions and others she seeks to answer in this latest installment of Jewish Encounters, a series devoted to Jewish themes and intellectuals. Goldstein, philosopher and author of *Incompleteness: The Proof and Paradox of Kurt Gödel*, first heard the name Baruch Spinoza in high school when her yeshiva teacher uttered the name "as an admonition, a cautionary tale of unbridled human intelligence blindly seeking its own doom." Spinoza was an *apikorus* ("a heretic") who put his faith in the power of logic and reason—the only true tools for salvation and goodness. God was nothing above nature, Spinoza argued; the Torah was not Divine Revelation but text written by very worldly men for political purpose.

It is in this framework that Goldstein begins to unravel the story of Spinoza's trammeled past: his persecuted Marrano origins, his desolate family life, his erudite aptitude for Talmudic study, his daring questions about God, and his eventual excommunication at the age of 23. Though *Betraying Spinoza* becomes heavily focused on Goldstein's personal memories and scholarly dalliances with the philosopher, the conversational setup takes a near impenetrable subject—a rationalist's philosophy steeped in Cartesian metaphysics and epistemology—and renders it accessible, even enjoyable.

Betraying Spinoza
The Renegade Jew Who Gave Us Modernity
by Rebecca Goldstein
Schocken, 304 pp., $19.95

Baruch Spinoza was born in Amsterdam to a family of Marranos—Sephardic Portuguese Jews forced by the Roman Catholic Church to convert to Christianity during the Spanish Inquisition. At the time of his birth, his family lived a relatively peaceful existence practicing Judaism without fear of persecution; yet Goldstein argues that the trauma of the Inquisition, as well as the Marranos' constant struggle for identity, played a pivotal role in Spinoza's thinking. Indeed, the author contends, Spinoza was, in part, responding to Europe's first experiment with anti-Semitism.

Most Marranos switched languages when they moved from Portugal to the Netherlands, picking up Dutch. They also often replaced their Portuguese names with Hebrew ones, or in many cases, took on Dutch names. Josef de los Rios became Michael van der Riviere, for example. Luis de Mercado

Kathryn DeVito is a freelance writer in Washington.

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became Louis van der Markt. All of these blows to the identity of the Marranos people underpin the book, and the author uses these details to probe the main question: What role did a Jewish identity have in making Baruch Spinoza the renegade philosopher that he was?

To find an answer, Goldstein goes back to her yeshiva teacher's criticism of Spinoza:

> It would be a Jew, at least someone who had been born a Jew, who would take goyisha philosophy much further than it had ever gone before into godlessness and immorality. It would be a Jew who would make philosophy into one long argument against the existence of God and against the difference between right and wrong.

As a young man Spinoza had been an apt pupil, but he soon began asking questions for which he knew his rabbis didn't have answers. He would not keep quiet. He sought to demonstrate that the truths of ethics have their source in the human condition and nowhere else, that our human nature is transformed merely in our knowing of it. He also began to argue that the Torah nowhere commits an individual to believe that the soul survives the body's death. On the contrary, he began asserting that there were many places where the Torah said the exact opposite.

When word of Spinoza's ideas got back to the rabbis, they were horrified. Here was one of their most brilliant students spouting ideas not even non-Jewish heretics would dare utter. What would the *goyim* think? When the rabbis questioned him, Spinoza refused to defend himself or his ideas.

It seems, as Goldstein acutely observes, that Spinoza—like many Jews—was an outcast from birth: "Spinoza" means "thorn" in Portuguese. Moreover, the signet ring the philosopher wore was inscribed with the word *caute* (Latin for "cautiously") and engraved with the image of a thorny rose. As Goldstein points out, "The name Spinoza strangely suits. Spinoza, as a Jew, presents himself to us adorned in a crown of eternally thorny questions."

After he was excommunicated, Spinoza removed himself from the community. He did not convert to Christianity. Rather, he opted for secularism at a time when the concept had not yet been formed. He found a simple job as a lens grinder where he could write his books in private and live an insular existence. Goldstein suggests that the loneliness of Spinoza's secularized spirituality stems from an individual forced to live outside the bounds of a religious identity.

Baruch Spinoza

Corbis / Archivo Iconografico, S.A.

In successive chapters, Goldstein gives a synopsis of Spinoza's most prominent works—*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and the *Ethics*—noting how Spinoza's struggle with identity and with secularism plays out in the works themselves. *Tractatus*, for example, argues for the separation of church and state. Spinoza published it anonymously, hoping that the work would make a mark so that he'd be able to publish his real masterpiece, *The Ethics*, under his own name. But *Tractatus* was not well received, and the author's true identity was soon known throughout Europe. Anyone remotely associated with the writer was deemed a pariah. Spinoza became a thinker one could admire only in secret. Again insularity became paramount.

The ideas Spinoza espoused in *Tractatus* would later be found in John Locke's treatises on government, which would, in turn, be read and used by the Founding Fathers in the drafting of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. In addition, Goldstein points out:

> What Spinoza has to say about the importance of allowing the discovery of nature to proceed unimpeded by religious dogma could not speak more pertinently to some of the raging controversies of our day, including the recurring public debate in America over Darwin's theory of evolution.

In the end, *Betraying Spinoza* achieves two ends: It gives novice philosophy readers a well-written survey in the rationalist's most important works, and it serves as a case study in how heritage makes us all who we are. Henri Bergson might have very well been thinking of Spinoza when he mused that "the present contains nothing more than the past," and that "what is found in the effect was already in the cause."

Spinoza took tragedy—his family's and his own—and deeply internalized it in his philosophy. He used reason and logic to give himself identity when it was denied his community by the Inquisition, and denied himself by Jewish scholars and leaders. The product was a framework that not only made it possible for him to live, but also created a new manner of thinking that forms a cornerstone of modern philosophical thought. ♦

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Her Father's Daughter

The personal is the political, and vice versa.

BY LAUREN WEINER

Mary Cheney was six when her father, Dick Cheney, became chief of staff in the Ford White House. She was eleven when he won Wyoming's lone seat in the House of Representatives. She was in her early twenties when he served as secretary of defense. We read here that Secretary Cheney was Mau-Maued by gay activists demanding an end to the ban on gays in the military. The ultimatum: Lift the ban or we will publicize the fact that your 22-year-old daughter is a lesbian.

Now It's My Turn
A Daughter's Chronicle of Political Life
by Mary Cheney
Threshold, 239 pp., $25

Not an honorable way to get someone to change his views. Nor was it effective with the Gulf war leader. But, in 2004, Vice President Cheney and his wife Lynne would split off from the man at the top of the 2004 ticket on the Republicans' proposed constitutional amendment prohibiting gay marriage. Their daughter wasn't for it; neither were they. The Federal Marriage Amendment, Mary Cheney says, "would write discrimination into the Constitution," and she advances the argument used by other amendment opponents, including figures on the right: Marriage, an institution long regulated by the 50 states, should not be taken over by the federal government.

That familial love and loyalty have affected the politics of an intensely political family will come as news to many. In the world beyond Washington, D.C., there floats the assumption that the right-wing old vice president must be about as supportive of his lesbian daughter as he is kind to wild doves and stray hunting companions.

His younger daughter appears to have taken "her turn" primarily to encourage Americans to think better of her father. The Dick Cheney of this account has character and heart. He is very close to Mary who, no less than Lynne or Liz Cheney, Mary's older sister, has taken part in Dick Cheney's public career from the beginning. (Mary describes her longtime partner, Heather Poe, as a reluctant participant.) Now 37, Mary pitched pieces of candy at parade-goers in her youth, was a campaign aide to her father when he first ran for vice president in 2000, and rose to chief of vice presidential operations in his reelection bid four years later.

She loves the nuts and bolts of the American political campaign, which she depicts as a not-unappealing blend of show biz and contest of ideas, puffery and policy. We get details—quite a few too many, actually—on the logistical snafus, the quirks of the photographers, reporters, and swashbuckling campaign advance men, and the finer points of successfully dropping a load of balloons on the convention crowd at the climax of the proceedings. (A parachute should be used to hold the balloons.)

The author senses that an obsessively political view of the world can earn her a laugh or two, as in her anecdote about balking at the dress code for pages at the 1988 Republican convention in New Orleans. She insists, with a comic sort of pout, that her reaction came from the staunch anti-communism of a Cheney—the pages' uniforms made them look like the Young Pioneers of the Soviet Union—when I know darn well it was the time-honored Sapphic unwillingness to put on a skirt.

Mary Cheney is lucky to have the family she has, and she quite properly acknowledges as much. Her father is indebted to the president, and she pays sincere homage there, too. She emphasizes the ways in which the person running for vice president is second banana at election time. That fact renders all the more remarkable her disclosure that President Bush, on the day during the 2004 campaign when he endorsed the amendment banning gay marriage, invited Mary, a Bush-Cheney official, to go public with a dissenting view if she so desired. (The invitation suggests that he shares George H.W. Bush's patrician reflex, which Peggy Noonan has noted, of welcoming certain kinds of criticism from the left.)

She did not take the president up on his offer of a chance to speak out. She decided, furthermore, to stay on in the campaign after nearly resigning over the issue. Such choices say something about Mary Cheney as an individual. They also bring to mind the remark of Quentin Crisp: "You can be proud of not being ashamed, but I don't think you can be proud of being gay." Self-acceptance and reticence can coexist. We homosexuals know this, but it is entirely lost on the straight Blue State liberals who brayed that the daughter of a vice president was "fair game" and so what was the big deal about the candidates on the Democratic ticket singling Mary Cheney out for public discussion?

Lynne Cheney enters this memoir only sporadically. She's a firecracker when she does appear, the most aggressively partisan member of a partisan family. The prairie marm-*cum*-intellectual chaired the National Endowment for the Humanities in two Republican administrations and was a pundit on the now defunct *Crossfire* show on CNN. She had a truly *Crossfire*-like reaction to John Kerry when he gratuitously worked Mary into the third presidential debate, in response to a general question that CBS's Bob

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Reuters / Corbis / Rick Wilking

Mary, Lynne, and Dick Cheney, 2004

Schieffer put to the candidates: Is homosexuality a choice or is it innate?

Kerry: "We're all God's children, Bob, and I think if you were to talk to Dick Cheney's daughter, who is a lesbian . . . " Mary reports that her mother heard that coming from the television, and said: "He can have all the fake suntans and manicures he wants, but deep down inside, he's rotten." Brought before a microphone, Mrs. Cheney kept the indignation but prudently left out the metrosexual gibe.

The author refuses to acknowledge how much more justifiable had been John Edwards's invocation of her name the week before in the vice presidential debate. Edwards was more on point, but she doesn't let her readers know this. She tells the story without mentioning that the moderator, Gwen Ifill of PBS, had asked Dick Cheney to address the controversy over gay marriage from the point of view of those who have "a family member" who is homosexual.

Edwards exploited that opening. I was touched by his comments at the time; I appreciated their oily sheen only in retrospect. Mary Cheney's retrospection has her tempering the anger she felt with a concession that Edwards "handled the situation skillfully." But the situation itself is not made clear.

Now It's My Turn only cursorily gives us the political lay of the land, which is what we need to make sense of its author's stint as the Democratic party's favorite lesbian. As William Kristol wrote at the time, Kerry and Edwards harped on the vice president's homosexual daughter as a warning to the Republicans not to play up gay marriage to try to gain the upper hand. The Democrats' political base was (and is) way out in front of the American people on the issue; if Republicans wanted to highlight the fringinesss of the Democrats' gay agenda, they could expect to be shown up as bigots and/or hypocrites in return.

Using Mary Cheney to accomplish this—especially Kerry's maladroit try at it—did not benefit the Democrats. A look at the record yields a *Washington Post* poll that had likely voters saying, by a 2 to 1 margin, that what Kerry did was "inappropriate."

As I say, the author hurries through the background on why the spotlight fell on her amid the intense partisan exchanges of a close election. "Whatever the reason," she writes, "I was furious." I imagine that she downplays the politics in favor of the emotions because, if she were in the Senate, she would have joined Kerry and Edwards in casting a "nay" vote on the Federal Marriage Amendment. Her discomfort at agreeing with them on the very thing about which they tried to make her a Bush-Cheney liability is more proof, if any were needed, that politics makes strange bedfellows.

Most Americans are not keen on homosexuals tying the knot—and they could well be right in wanting to preserve the traditional definition of marriage—but the degree to which they are accustomed to, if not affirming of, homosexuality can be measured by landmarks in this book. The *sub rosa* attempt in 1991 to subject the father of a lesbian to blackmail giving way by 2004 to openly goading him about her on national television. And all the goaders had to show for it was disapproval heavily laced with apathy. Now I call that progress. ♦

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Sick Unto Death

When Hollywood purges, the world recoils.

BY JOE QUEENAN

The regurgitation of foodstuffs is one of the least appetizing human activities, and certainly not a Kodak moment. Why then has on-screen vomiting become such a fixture of motion pictures in the past few years? The situation is so dire that upchuck has even begun to appear in animated form, with a cartoon version of Keanu Reeves spilling his cartoon guts in the recent film *A Scanner Darkly*.

Whether the motion picture in question is *Lady in the Water*, *The Constant Gardener*, *Doom*, *Ray*, *Sin City*, *The Road to Perdition*, *Cheaper by the Dozen*, *Saved*, or *Remember the Titans*, sooner or later the statutory vomiting scene will occur. Just as the testicular place-kick, the distaff haymaker, the severed ear, and the multicultural street gang have all become visual staples of contemporary cinema, filmmakers have now persuaded themselves that every time they show somebody puking, they are doing something really, really daring and really *kewl*—even though everyone else is doing it, too.

It's enough to make you puke.

The Golden Age of Vomiting is generally thought to have begun in 1996, when Nicholas Cage purged himself in *The Rock*, a film so revered and so well-circulated among young men that they have literally watched Cage puking dozens of times, and have probably been inspired to imitate him in real life. Yet to understand why vomiting has become so prevalent, one must bear in mind that Hollywood is almost equally divided between cretins and thieves. Some directors—the morons—include an upchucking scene because they think they are being iconoclastic and original, while others—the plagiarizing hacks—do it because the film they are ripping off includes copious vomiting, and they figure: If it ain't broke, why fix it?

Whatever the motivation, the scene is always designed in such a way as to make the manipulated audience exclaim, "Oh, my God! He's puking! I can't believe what I'm seeing with my very own eyes!" This ability to pass off the tired, the predictable, and the ubiquitous as something shockingly original—and do it with an air of smug self-satisfaction—is referred to in journalistic circles as "giving them the full Quindlen."

Bettmann / Corbis

Personally, I have no objection to celluloid puking, provided it is done tastefully and is used primarily to adumbrate the lofty themes of the film. I thoroughly enjoyed Jamie Foxx's vomiting in *Any Given Sunday* and Denzel Washington's upchucking in both *Remember the Titans* and *He Got Game* because the puking was consistent with the films' messages: Sports make you sick. But I draw the line at gratuitous upchucking. Thus, I was dismayed by the serial prepubescent puking in Steve Martin's *Cheaper by the Dozen*, because it did not advance the heartwarming plot, and I was appalled at the vomit-by-numbers scene in The Rock's latest bomb *Doom*, because the craven psychopath doing the puking did not seem to have his heart in it.

Two things baffle me about cinematic regurgitation. One, why is it so often missing from films where you would most expect it, like *Braveheart* or *The Passion of the Christ*, or anything starring Madonna? Two, why don't vomitative films contain more than one puking scene? If the objective is to illustrate that things have gotten so bad that one of the characters has to puke his guts out, why doesn't he do it twice? Or five or six times? And why don't the other characters puke as well? Are they lacking emotion?

A case in point: When Rachel Weisz's duplicitous lover peels back the shroud to examine her charred, mutilated corpse early in *The Constant Gardener*, it is entirely appropriate that he pukes his guts out. On the most obvious level, it apprises the audience that something absolutely terrible has happened, while sparing them the trauma of having actually to gaze upon the mutilated corpse.

Yet in the end there is something unsettling about this scene. If loverboy gets sick after seeing her brutalized corpse, why doesn't Ralph Fiennes, who plays her sensitive husband and who seems like a chap with a delicate tummy, not puke as well? And why in a motion picture that features both a disembowelment and a crucifixion is there no subsequent puking? It is as if the director were using some sort of gastrointestinal shorthand: I want to establish early in the film that our subject is nauseating, but once that's out of the way, I want you to all stow the barf bags.

Frankly, I find this prissy attitude unfair to upchuck aficionados. When a movie starts with a scene involving vomiting, the viewer has a right to expect things to get progressively more disgusting as the film goes on. But when people are disemboweled, crucified, or have their tongues ripped out without any subsequent concomitant vomiting by victims, participants, or even inno-

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cent bystanders, it suggests a certain moral laxity on the part of the filmmaker, as though we should all just get used to this mayhem and simply gorge ourselves on Milk Duds and popcorn.

Cognizant of the public's burgeoning affection for upchuck, directors increasingly get the spewing and heaving out of the way as soon as possible. The vomiting in *The Constant Gardener* occurs almost right off the bat. The extraneous puking in *Doom* takes place about 25 minutes into the film. And in the very strange movie *Max*, which deals with a one-armed, Berlin-based Jewish art dealer who unadvisedly befriends a struggling young painter named Adolf Hitler, the painter George Grosz vomits in the very first scene in the film. Since Hitler doesn't even have the Nazi party up and running by this point, this seems like a clear-cut case of premature, perfunctory puking. Which brings me to my criticism: Since there will be plenty of nauseating incidents later in the film, why not save the best puking scene for last?

Purists may object that this entire subject is disgusting. I agree. But then again, so is Hollywood. Ultimately, I am not calling for less puking on the big screen. What I would like to see is a more concerted effort on the part of filmmakers to integrate puking into a coherent dramatic model, and to make less use of vomiting as a cheap stunt. Sad to say, at this point in the history of motion pictures, the regurgitative arts serve an almost entirely ornamental function in mainstream cinema. Worse, from the perspective of hardcore barf buffs, once that pivotal puking scene is over (and there will obviously be no more spewing for the remainder of the film), what's the point of hanging around?

It calls to mind Mercutio's untimely death in *Romeo and Juliet*: *Thanks, Immortal Bard, now you've gone and spoiled everything*. Henry Miller once said, "If you're going to start with the cannons, you've got to finish with TNT." I honestly believe that if you're going to start with queasiness, you've got to finish with nausea. Otherwise, you're shortchanging Mr. John Q. Public. ♦

Rocky in Cleats

An average Philadelphian with above-average skill.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

There once was a time when sports movies centered on famous men whose bravery and heroism were held up as a model for all to emulate. Gary Cooper was Lou Gehrig, the great first baseman who called himself "the luckiest man on the face of the earth" even though he was dying young, in *The Pride of the Yankees*. Pat O'Brien inspired a selfish band of boys to ascend to lofty heights as he told the Notre Dame football team to "win just one for the Gipper" in *Knute Rockne: All American*. Burt Lancaster showed how the greatest track-and-field man in America overcame anti-Indian prejudice in *Jim Thorpe: All American*. William Bendix limned a Baltimore foundling's rise to greatness in *The Babe Ruth Story*.

Invincible
Directed by Ericson Core

These days, however, professional athletes comprise a subset of celebrity that ranks somewhere between John Mark Karr and a porn star. Will anyone ever make a movie called *The Barry Bonds Story*? Will the race between Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa to overtake Babe Ruth's single-season home-run record be turned into heartbreaking fare to rival the HBO tearjerker *61** about Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris?

With present-day sports stars seemingly more prone to villainy than heroism, Hollywood has been forced to look elsewhere in its quest to portray real-world athletic triumphs. The new-order sports movie is about an ordinary person who defies all odds and the low expectations of his friends and family to do something extraordinary. The first of these was *Rudy*, the 1993 tale of Notre Dame benchwarmer Rudy Ruettiger and his determination to play football for the Fighting Irish. Everyone scoffs—"you're 5 feet nothing, 100 and nothing," says one friend—but Rudy perseveres and ends up sacking the quarterback during the one down he is allowed on the field. He is carried off the field by his fellow players.

Rudy was not a big hit, but it has become a phenomenon on cable television, where it plays constantly to an audience of eager boys who are willing to watch it dozens of times. Its influence can be seen in the triptych of sports movies released by Disney in the past four years. In *The Rookie*, Dennis Quaid plays Jim Morris, the Texas high-school baseball coach who discovered in his mid-30s that he could throw a baseball faster than he did as a kid and managed to get himself hired by the Tampa Bay Devil Rays. *Miracle* tells the story of the 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey team, that ingathering of outmatched Americans who defeated the top-ranked Soviets.

And now we have the best of all, *Invincible*, in which a part-time Philadelphia schoolteacher and bartender named Vince Papale suddenly finds himself vying for a job on his beloved Philadelphia Eagles football team in the desperate summer and fall of 1976. *Invincible* was directed by its cinematographer, Ericson Core, and it's one of the most visually striking American films in recent years—beautiful and seedy and grimy all at the same time. It's worth seeing alone for

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Disney Enterprises, Inc. / Ron Phillips

Mark Wahlberg (right) as Vince Papale

the evocation of Philadelphia in the years of its financial and industrial collapse (and for its hilarious reminder of the kinds of facial hair and suits men felt compelled to wear during those years).

Even though *Invincible* is a sports fan's fantasy come to life, the Vince Papale we see here (played by a very subdued Mark Wahlberg) isn't living a dream. He is fighting for his life. Out of work, abandoned by a wife who tells him he will never amount to anything, unable to pay his phone bill, Vince is a 30-year-old man at a dead end. He doesn't take all that seriously the news that newly hired Eagles coach Dick Vermeil (Greg Kinnear) is having open tryouts. His friends insist he go, and he does go, and he's invited to training camp, and he isn't cut the first day or the second. He never expects to stick around, but he has nothing else to do and nothing left to wish for.

Director Core and screenwriter Brad Gann have drenched their tale in a melancholy that might not actually have been present in Papale's actual story. It's true he was a 30-year-old man who never even played college ball, but before Papale tried out for the Eagles he had played a season for Philadelphia's team in the short-lived World Football League. He was already a minor pro player, not simply a schlep off the street.

But even if they have magnified Papale's difficulties (and added a romance with a woman the real Papale wouldn't even meet for another decade), Core and Gann have made an inspired dramatic choice by playing his story on the downbeat. Vince is going through the same struggle as every working-class man in Philadelphia, and as the movie progresses his father and his friends are forced onto a picket line against Westinghouse—a sure precursor to the closure of the company's plants and the loss of those jobs forever.

Unlike his friends and family, Vince finds himself in a position to transcend his circumstances and do something great. His pursuit of a sports career is ennobling. He's not in it for the bling, but to challenge himself to scale new heights and, as he does so, to give hope and glory to his tormented friends and his blasted city. No wonder moviegoers are responding so enthusiastically to *Invincible*. It is a deeply moving reminder that professional sports can be more than just 'roids and rape. ♦

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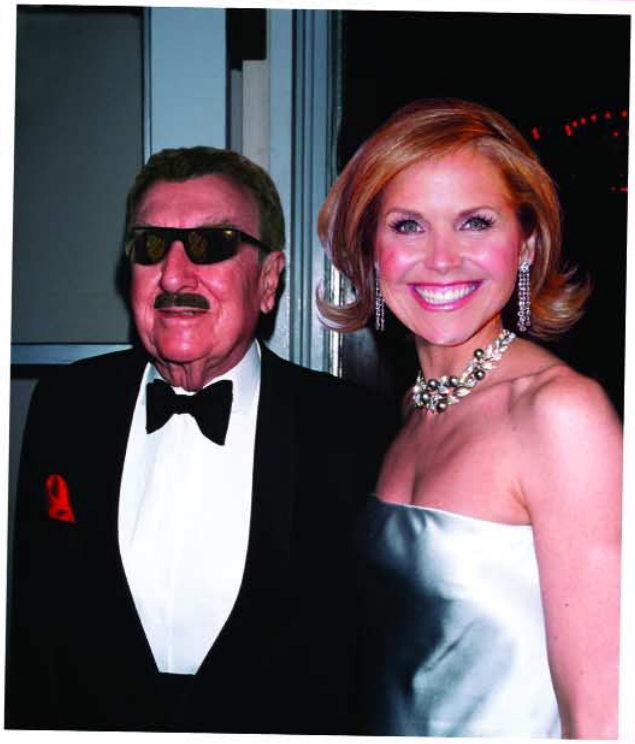
Parody

CBS spokesman Gil Schwartz announced that a photograph of Katie Couric had been digitally altered by an employee who was 'a little zealous.' Published in a company magazine to promote Couric's September debut as a CBS Evening News anchor, the photo was Photoshopped to make the TV personality look 20 pounds lighter.

—News item

More photos from the internal CBS publicity archives . . .

Former CBSer Diane Sawyer's undercover Oktoberfest investigation for ABC



Rising Anchor Couric with her ever-youthful predecessor Walter Cronkite, now 91.

the weekly Standard

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